

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
FRESHMEN TRANSITION PROGRAMS
IN THE KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN AREA

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ABSTRACT

Transitioning into high school can be exciting but also challenging for some students. To combat some of the common pitfalls incoming freshmen face, schools are developing freshmen induction programs. This research was a descriptive study of twenty high school freshman transition programs in twenty area Kansas City Metropolitan School Districts. The school districts were on both sides of the Kansas/Missouri stateline and varied in student population from 1,600 to over 28,000 students. The total student population studied was over 215,000 students and represented sixty-three middle schools and forty-five high schools. These districts included urban, suburban, and rural settings. This study was designed to determine: 1) if there were common concerns/motivations for why districts had instituted a freshmen transition program, 2) what the goals for each district's induction program, 3) what curriculum/procedures were used to achieve the goals, 4) the possible evidence of achievement of the desired outcomes, 5) the feasibility of comparing the data by district, 6) the existence of common program attributes among districts that appeared to be effective, and 7) if evidence were present, make recommendations regarding effective practice in freshman transition programs. There has not been a similar study conducted in the Kansas City area. Each school district personnel was interviewed and asked a series of questions about their current supports and resources that are available for incoming freshmen. This information was organized on a spreadsheet and the findings were compiled to see if common patterns emerged. All twenty districts currently have freshmen transition programs and all districts that were tracking student data reported positive data. The study listed components and goals of freshmen transition programs from each school district. The results of this study illustrated that the districts interviewed strongly believe that a freshmen transition program was helping them in the transition of incoming freshmen. Administrators and school staff gave a resounding approval for the programs they had in place and most were interested in exploring options to expand their programs. The hope of the research would be that school districts can review best practices that have been implemented in the Kansas City Metropolitan area and use components to help ease the transitional burden for incoming freshmen. Each district and school is unique, and not all of the components mentioned in the study will work for each school and student.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ABSTRACT..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | iv |
| CHAPTER #1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY | |
| 1.1 Problem Statement | 1 |
| 1.2 Purpose/Significance of the Study | 2 |
| CHAPTER #2: LITERATURE REVIEW | |
| 2.1 Research Supporting Freshmen Transition Programs..... | 3 |
| 2.2 Components of Freshmen Transition Programs..... | 4 |
| 2.3 Research Studies | 6 |
| 2.4 Dissertation Studies..... | 10 |
| CHAPTER #3: METHODOLOGY | |
| 3.1 Methodology of Research and Participants..... | 19 |
| 3.2 Research Questions | 20 |
| 3.3 Data Collection..... | 21 |
| 3.4 Summary | 22 |
| CHAPTER #4: SCHOOL DISTRICT DESCRIPTIONS AND SUMMARIES | |
| 4.1 District #1 | 23 |
| 4.2 District #2..... | 24 |
| 4.3 District #3..... | 26 |
| 4.4 District #4..... | 28 |
| 4.5 District #5..... | 30 |
| 4.6 District #6..... | 32 |
| 4.7 District #7..... | 34 |
| 4.8 District #8..... | 35 |
| 4.9 District #9..... | 37 |
| 4.10 District #10..... | 39 |
| 4.11 District #11 | 40 |
| 4.12 District #12..... | 42 |
| 4.13 District #13..... | 43 |
| 4.14 District #14..... | 45 |
| 4.15 District #15..... | 47 |
| 4.16 District #16..... | 48 |
| 4.17 District #17..... | 51 |
| 4.18 District #18..... | 53 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 4.19 District #19 | 54 |
| 4.20 District #20 | 56 |
| CHAPTER #5: ANALYSIS OF FRESHMEN INDUCTION PROGRAMS | |
| 5.1: Analysis of Districts | 60 |
| 5.2: Common Concerns/Motivations Among Districts..... | 60 |
| 5.3: Goals Targeted by Each School District | 62 |
| 5.4: Chart Summarizing the Major Goals of Transition Programs | 65 |
| 5.5: Curriculum/Procedures Used to Achieve Goals | 66 |
| 5.6 Possible Evidence of Achievement of the Desired Outcomes | 66 |
| 5.7: Comparing Data and Induction Program Attributes Among Districts..... | 67 |
| 5.8: Chart Summarizing the Major Components of Transition Programs | 72 |
| 5.9: Recommendations Regarding Effective Practice..... | 75 |
| LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY | 75 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 76 |
| APPENDICES | |
| Appendix 1 | 77 |
| Appendix 2 | 78 |
| Appendix 3 | 79 |
| REFERENCES | 89 |

Chapter #1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Problem Statement

Historically, the transition into high school has been positively correlated with significant declines in areas such as achievement, attendance, participation and parent involvement (Heller, Calderon, Medrich, Bottoms, Cooney, & Feagin, 2002; Gifford and Dean, 1990). Recent reports have demonstrated that the United States has a high school dropout crisis of alarming proportions (Neild, 2008). Nearly one of every three eighth-grade students in the United States do not graduate from high school. One-half of black and Latino students do not make it to graduation day (Orfield, 2004). In 2004, The National Board of Educational Testing and Public Policy released a report titled “The Education Pipeline in the United States, 1970-2000.” This report illustrated that a major leak in the “pipeline” occurs during the ninth grade year (Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, & Gruia, 2004). Attrition between grades 9 and 10 started to increase in the late 1970s and accelerated after the mid-1980s. By the turn of the century, there were nearly 12% fewer students enrolled in grade 10 than in grade 9 the previous year. To provide some sense of the numbers of students being lost between grades 9 and 10, in 1998-99, there were 3.86 million students enrolled in grade 9 in public schools in the U.S., but in 1999-2000, there were 3.42 million enrolled in grade 10, a drop of 11.4%.

With the increase in accountability resulting from adequate yearly progress and the “No Child Left Behind” legislation, and public concern on responsible school spending and outcomes, it is important that schools make wise and informed decisions on where and how to focus their efforts and resources. States and school districts struggle to redesign their high schools so students can receive the best educational support they need to be successful during

school. A new reform model that has been implemented in some school districts is the freshmen “transition” program. A freshmen transition program provides various services and supports freshmen as they enter high school. These programs and curricula can take on many different formats, but many are structured to support transitioning freshmen as they enter high school.

1.2 Purpose/Significance of the Study

The focus of this research was a descriptive study of freshman transition programs in twenty public high schools in twenty area Kansas City Metropolitan School Districts. This study was designed to determine: 1) if there were common concerns/motivations for why schools had instituted a freshmen transition program, 2) what were the goals for each surveyed high school’s induction program, 3) what curriculum/procedures were used to achieve the goals, 4) the possible evidence of achievement of the desired outcomes, 5) the feasibility of comparing the data by district, 6) the existence of common program attributes among schools that appeared to be effective, and 7) if evidence were present, make recommendations regarding effective practice in freshman transition programs. There has not been a similar study conducted in the Kansas City area.

Chapter #2: Literature Review

2.1 Research Supporting Freshmen Transition Programs

There is a body of research that supports the notion that eighth and ninth grade is a defining period for teenagers. Researchers have noted adjustment problems during this transition period that include: decrease in grade point average, attendance, feelings of connectedness to school, low co-curricular participation, increases in anxiety concerning school procedures and older students, social difficulties and changes in relationships with parents (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). According to McIver, more students fail 9th grade than any other grade level, but when middle level students experience a variety of programs such as social support, orientation to the next school, peer interaction and curriculum information as well as academic support, fewer students are retained in ninth grade (1990, p. 259). Research indicates that students who participate in transition programs which actively involve students, parents, and staff members are less likely to drop out of high school even when demographic and other information is held constant (Smith, 1997; Hertzog and Morgan, 1998).

Jay Hertzog (2006) identified three distinct differences that may lead to struggles with students as they transition from middle school to high school. First, grade nine is often when students begin to accrue credits that lead to graduation. Second, there is a stark difference in educational philosophies between the middle and high school setting. Middle schools usually evolve around a team of teachers who meet regularly to discuss student progress. High schools are departmentalized and do not have the team concept as the middle school. Third, the middle school concept is built on subject mastery by students. The high school approach is based on competition for honors and class rank. Hertzog concludes that due to

these three profound differences, an effective transition plan is needed at the freshmen level to assist students during this transitional time.

Behavior problems in the form of suspensions and expulsions appear to increase significantly early in the ninth grade year (Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). Middle grades students identified academic challenges as especially important to making it in secondary school (Zeedyk et al., 2003). After entering high school, students in the study added time management, ability to stay on task, social skills, and behavior as essential elements in success. Social matters such as bullying, getting lost, and establishing peer relationships at secondary school overshadowed concern about academics.

2.2 Components of Freshmen Transition Programs

There are different components to a freshmen transition program. Each district's programs vary, depending on district concerns and specific outcomes. Some schools have peer mentoring and relationships as a component to helping students transition into high school. Kinney (1993) found that expanded social experiences in high school represent a new opportunity for students who experience exclusion in middle school. Kinney described social networks in middle schools as being limited to a dichotomy of popular students and the rest of the student body. Students in high school were able to establish new social networks or cliques that did not exist in their respective middle schools.

Akos and Galassis (2004) found that students look forward to making new friends, having more freedom, and attending more school events as they transition to high school. The students' greatest concerns revolved around the amount of homework, class difficulty, and organizational issues (e.g., getting lost). Parents were concerned that their children would feel negative peer pressure in both academic and social realms. The study also

indicated teachers' concerns that students would feel pressure to do well in class, experience challenging courses, and have difficulty making new friends. Teacher perceptions were found to be different from students' perceptions in regard to worries about homework. If transition programs are oriented purely around the teacher assessments of student worries, efforts may be misdirected (Brown & Armstrong, 1982). Falbo, Lein, and Amador (2001) found that students whose parents monitored their activities and intervened positively (e.g., schoolwork, peer networks, and direct participation at the school) were more likely to have smooth transitions from middle school to high school. Furthermore, it was noted by Feuerstein (2000) that increased school contact with parents typically resulted in reciprocal parent contact which improved overall communication among school personnel and families.

There is research on identifying important components and/or aspects of freshmen transition programs. According to one source, transition programs need to include collaboration between eighth and ninth grade buildings/personnel (Mizelle, 1999). Transition programs that consistently ask students to reflect on and to experience the complexities and nuances of the distinctive features of high school have greater impact than isolated information sessions (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000).

Programs designed to reduce high school dropout rates at this level must address the challenges associated with the transition to high school. They must provide targeted early intervention in order to promote academic recovery (Roderick & Camburn, 1999). Successful transition programs address the information gap by providing students and families with information about the academic, social, and the organizational similarities and differences between middle school and high school (Mizelle, 1999). Zeedyk and associates (2003) suggest the following: expanding the number and duration of visits of students

between schools; allowing them to spend a day with secondary school students; inviting secondary school students and teachers to speak at the middle schools; and providing mentoring to middle school students by secondary school students. High school dropout rates are significantly lower in school districts that have explicit middle school to high school transition programs (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Smith, 1997). Effective programs address curriculum (e.g., academic rigor of courses); facilities (e.g., location of classrooms, restrooms); and safety and discipline (e.g., rules and discipline code); and, provide accurate information (Mac Iver, 1990).

2.3 Research Studies

A 2008 study from the Council of the Great City Schools recommended the following for effective transitional support services: 1) districts should explicitly target initiatives and interventions at the ninth grade level, addressing both the academic and environmental challenges of transition; 2) districts need to sustain a system-wide focus on explicit literacy instruction, particularly the development of content area reading comprehension and vocabulary, to improve student performance; 3) structural reforms alone are insufficient to improve student outcomes. In order to provide effective support to ninth graders, districts should combine structural changes with meaningful curricular and instructional supports; 4) while remediation of struggling students can be a useful educational support, a challenging academic curriculum may help keep students engaged with consequent gains in achievement; 5) districts should develop student level indicator tracking systems to help target support and identify at-risk students before they fall too far off track in the transition to high school; and, 6) the federal government and private philanthropy should invest in rigorous studies of how to use data and data systems to improve support and instruction, particularly for students

making the transition to high school. The study concludes by stating that districts must develop specific plans to address student needs and invest time and resources in understanding both what it takes to achieve throughout implementation of these reforms and the extent to which these interventions can bring about genuine educational improvement (Horwitz, 2008).

A phenomenological study was conducted in New South Wales. It was premised on students keeping journals during their first ten weeks of high school. Their journal entries were studied utilizing a phenomenological psychological approach following Giorgi (1985a, 1985b). Seven themes pertaining to appropriate transitional services were noted: 1) the pivotal role of peers in helping or hindering adjustment to high school; 2) the place of school support through programs and activities; 3) the challenges of new procedures; 4) different types of learning activities; 5) feelings of confidence and success that can enhance transitional experiences; 6) the place of homework in the academic curriculum; and, 7) the role of teachers in affecting student integration in to high school. These themes could be useful as educators begin to explore the appropriate transitional support programs (Ganeson, 2009).

Several other qualitative studies and longitudinal studies have been conducted. Akos and Galassi (2004) conducted a study that described a cross-sectional comparison of student, teacher, and parent perceptions during the transitions to middle school and to high school. Surveys were administered to students, parents, and teachers. The authors compared students', caregivers', and teachers' retrospective perceptions of the transitional aspects that they looked forward to or worried about. Students and caregivers had similar perceptions of the positive aspects of the transition. Teachers and school staff expressed varying concerns

for students. For example, the two concerns for students were the amount of homework and classes being more difficult. Although parents also mentioned the amount of homework and pressure to do well, teachers' top concerns were about students' difficulty fitting in or making new friends. This study indicated that schools must incorporate all stakeholders into developing a comprehensive transition program that meets the needs of all involved.

Isakson and Jarvis (1999) employed a longitudinal design assessing adolescents' adjustments during the transition to high school. Surveys were administered to students once during the eighth grade year and twice during the ninth grade year. Student surveys included subscales measuring school membership in activities, daily hassles, coping, autonomy, perceived social support from friends, and relationship support. Parent surveys were designed to measure positive and negative experiences, midlife identity concerns, and coping. Student decreases in grade point average (GPA) following the transition were associated with family, school, and friend stressors. Even when peers were supportive, students experienced achievement loss. The authors hypothesized that the distracting nature of peer relationships was a potential factor. Student GPAs typically rebounded during the second semester of ninth grade, but school attendance rates decreased in the same semester. Somewhat surprisingly, a lower sense of autonomy was associated with higher grade point averages. Perceived support from parents translated to a greater sense of school belongingness.

Smith (1997) used a national representative sample of public school students (NELS 88/2000). She examined the effects of middle school transition programs on achievement and retention. The results indicated that students of color and students from lower SES backgrounds attended schools that were significantly less likely to offer transition

programming. High school dropout rates were significantly lower for students who attended schools with full or partial transition programs. Students attending schools without transition programs experienced higher rates of dropout. Students with access to full and partial transition programs had higher GPAs than students who had no transition programming.

Morgan and Hertzog (2001) conducted a comprehensive qualitative study of student perceptions of the transition to high school. An open-ended instrument based on middle school and high school personnel perspectives was administered in a classroom setting. Focus groups were held with groups of eight to twelve students per grade level. Five consistent themes related to student concerns emerged including curriculum (such as academic rigor of courses); facilities (including location of classrooms, restrooms, etc.); safety and discipline (rules and discipline code); teachers, counselors, and administrators; and general information (buses, lunch, etc.).

Zeedyk, M., Gallacher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B., and Lindsay, K. (2003) conducted a qualitative study of student, parent, and teacher opinions of the transition to high school. The researchers developed a set of open-ended questions related to five topics including aspects of secondary school to which children look forward, pupils' concerns, parents' concerns, skills that were perceived to be useful for transition, and suggested means by which schools could facilitate the adjustment to the new setting/environment. The authors found that students were most excited about new friends, new academic subjects, new teachers, and new routines. Parents also mentioned extra-curricular activities and learning challenges. Students were less concerned with academic matters and more concerned about bullying, getting lost, and peer relationships. The most

frequent responses from parents included bullying and peer relationships. Findings suggested that teachers focused on transition as a problem to be solved by the school.

In a study by Neild, Stoner-Eby, and Furstenberg (2002), a sub-sample of students from the Philadelphia Education Longitudinal Study (PELS) was utilized. The study had 1,470 high school students and their parent. The researchers conducted phone interviews following the 8th and 9th grade school years. In addition to interviews, grades, attendance, and behavior records were used to compare students. The conclusions of the study included the following statements that may indicate why school districts believe they need a freshmen transition/induction program: “The experience of the ninth grade year contributes substantially to the probability of dropping out, despite controls for demographic and family background characteristics, previous school performance, and pre high school attitudes and ambitions” and, “efforts to decrease the dropout rate would do well to focus on the critical high school transition year” (p. 29).

2.4 Dissertation Studies

In the past few years, advance degree candidates have begun to conduct research studies on freshmen transition in to high school. Roskosky (2006) developed an evaluation tool for transitional program design. Case (2006) compared student perceptions on the transition from middle school to high school between a large suburban school and a smaller rural school. Spanier (2006) used students in two settings; one set of students participated in a transition program and the other students did not. The goal of the study was to see if academics, attendance, and discipline would be affected by the implementation of a transition program. According to her results, the transition program pointed to helping

increase academics and attendance and lowering discipline referrals for the students in the transition program compared to students who did not participate.

Nykasa (2009) examined mentor students' perceptions of a Freshman Mentor Program at a high school located in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. The conceptual framework for the study was based on Nel Noddings' Theory of Care. The research questions that guided the study included; 1) how do mentor students view their role in the Freshman Mentor Program; 2) to what extent do the mentors' views of their role change as they participate in the program; and, 3) through involvement in a peer-based mentor program, how do mentor students perceive and demonstrate a sense of caring for the mentees. Eleven mentor students participated in this qualitative case study. Interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were utilized in an effort to examine the mentors' views of both the program and their work with the mentees.

Six themes pertaining to the research questions were identified through student mentor narratives. The findings suggested the mentors understood the importance of their role in the program and that the mentors developed relationships with the mentees. The mentors also developed a sense of caring for the mentees as a result of working with them. During interviews and focus group discussions, the mentors offered suggestions for changes in the program to help them become more effective in meeting the needs of the mentees and carrying out the goals of the program. Some of the recommendations included the importance of stating the goals of the mentor program clearly, providing practical and ongoing training for the mentors, and creating an evaluation tool to be used by the committee members, mentors and mentees to measure outcomes.

Bryant (2008) conducted a research study to determine to what degree of fidelity the procedural, social, and academic elements of the Link Crew Transition Program (LCTP) had been implemented, as perceived by the program advisors. Another purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference in schools' Academic Performance Index (API) growth scores, the level of proficiency in ninth-grade California Standards Test scores in English, dropout rates, truancy rates, and suspension rates when compared to the degree of fidelity to which The Link Crew Transition Program has been implemented. This was an *ex post facto* and descriptive study. The population and sample for this study consisted of 110 Link Crew advisors in California public high schools located in eleven counties. Data were collected from eighty-one Link Crew Transition advisors through a locator survey. Additionally, archival data were collected from the California Department of Education website. Both substantially (n=27) and partially (n=54) implemented program schools have the orientation component in place with a high degree of fidelity. Lack of resources in the form of additional staff and money was a limiting factor to the success of the LCTP. Program advisors reported that Link leaders, as well as freshmen, develop a sense of belonging and connectedness with the school as a result of program participation. There were no significant differences between substantially and partially implemented LCTP schools and school success indicators. This study did not find any significant difference in the success factors of substantially and partially implemented schools. Qualitative data revealed a positive experience for transitioning freshmen, the development of a sense of belonging, and the development of leadership qualities for the Link leaders. Link Crew Advisors shared insightful information about their programs and offered suggestions and reflections.

Choate (2009) developed a case study that was threefold: 1) identify the perceived needs and perceptions of students, parents, and teachers regarding the transition to high school, 2) compare the perceptions of the three stakeholders, and 3) compare these perceptions over time. The rationale guiding this study was based on middle school philosophy of how to best educate the early adolescent and literature regarding student transition at various stages in their academic career. Using several questionnaires, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 111 students, 75 parents, and 14 eighth grade teachers from a Midwestern middle school during the spring of the students' eighth grade year. The second set of data was collected from 47 students and 44 parents from the first set of subjects, and ten ninth grade teachers during the spring of the students' ninth grade year. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency distributions, while the qualitative data were analyzed by extracting and combining data units, and coding, sorting and analyzing concepts and themes. The results showed that there were differences in both positive and negative perceptions associated with this transition from the perspective of the three groups of participants and that these perceptions changed over time. The findings also suggested that there was a narrow range of sources of information regarding the transition that students felt was helpful. The stakeholders suggested specific strategies to help in the transition to high school.

VandeWiele's (2008) study was designed to determine organizational, teacher, and administrative factors that impact ninth grade attendance, discipline, and student achievement, as a result of "Freshman Academy" implementation. Data were collected using a validated survey instrument that included factors that impact ninth grade transition into high school. Interviews were conducted with Freshman Academy teachers, administrators,

and counselors who teach in Freshman Academy programs at two high schools in western Illinois. Freshman Academy impact on attendance, discipline, and student achievement was measured through analysis of student level data. Data were triangulated and findings were used to determine overall effectiveness of Freshman Academies in assisting ninth grade students in transitioning into high school. Results indicated that freshman transition programs may have an impact on ninth grade transition, assuming that all aspects of the program are considered.

McDaniel (2008) conducted a comparative case study of two Ninth Grade Success Academies at two schools in southern Alabama. Ninth Grade Success Academies used a school within a school model that isolated freshman students from upper class students while teaching them skills for academic and social success (Kerr, 2000). These academies were structured in a way that attempted to increase school attendance and decrease discipline problems. This research examined students' and teachers' perceptions about their involvement in these programs at both high schools in an effort to determine their strengths and weaknesses during the first year of implementation as perceived by the participants.

Data were collected during the first year of implementation of the academies at the two comparative high schools during the 2005-2006 school year. Data collection strategies included focus group interviews with students in the fall of 2005 and in the spring of 2006. Separate interviews were held at each school with these students. Data collection also included responses to open ended survey questions. Surveys were administered in the spring of 2006 to ninth grade teachers at both locations. Transcriptions of interviews and responses to survey questions were analyzed using qualitative software and through a constant comparative method. Constant themes emerged and then were identified and compared from

data collected at each site. Data from students and teachers at the two Ninth Grade Success Academies were compared to identify inter and intra program themes, generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations. Recommendations included having one administrator to better promote ninth grade students to aide with equity and consistency in student treatment. Programs should be utilized to assist with remediation of students who have reading and math deficiencies. These programs should be in place to give students additional opportunities to pass courses so that they will not get behind with coursework and possibly drop out of school. Some exposure to upperclassmen may actually assist with a positive transition to high school. Also, adding teams in ninth grade would create fewer feelings of isolation and aid with student feelings of acceptance. Parental involvement programs and programs promoting positive school culture and reward systems for freshmen were also recommended.

Hale's (2008) study was to examine the impact that an academy program had on ninth grade student achievement, discipline, attendance, and retention. The purpose of this study was to determine if the Freshman Academy approach had a positive effect on the problems ninth graders were facing at Upstate High School. The study was designed to determine whether there were relationships that existed between the use of a ninth grade transition program and that of a traditional ninth grade program. Analysis of the data revealed Upstate High School's Academy had within the first year of its establishment increased the promotion rate to tenth grade by 3.8%. The percentage of promotion dropped in the second year at a rate of 5.5% from the previous year. The study of the first two years of the academy program did not provide enough data to support conclusions that the academy was successful in improving academic performance, discipline, and attendance.

Srofe's (2009) research study also focused on the Freshmen Academy model. The outcomes of the model were to improve ninth-grade attendance, academic achievement, and school engagement for at-risk students. School engagement encompassed three interrelated components: emotion, behavior, and cognition. The study used a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test comparison design with no random assignment to measure the impact of the Freshman Academy on attendance, academic achievement, and school engagement. Student interviews were conducted to see what aspects of the Freshman Academy which they believed promoted school engagement and selected input as to what improvements could be made to the program.

The target population was the ninth-grade students who had been identified as at risk at a high school outside Denver, Colorado. The research was conducted using their Freshman Academy students and a comparison group. An independent t-test was used to test for differences in the three areas of school engagement for the Freshman Academy and for the comparison group. A paired sample t-test was used to compare the eighth-grade and ninth-grade unexcused absences and GPA. The results from the student survey on school engagement showed that for behavioral engagement the comparison group had higher levels of engagement than the group in the Freshman Academy program. For cognitive and emotional engagement there were no differences. Pre-GPAs and post-GPAs for the Freshman Academy were not significantly different. For unexcused absences, the averages were significantly different from eighth to ninth grade between no program and program. Truancies, measured by unexcused absences, were reduced by two-thirds for those in the program. Qualitative findings were quite different from those results from the school engagement survey, attendance data, and GPA data. From the student interviews, the

students commonly reported that the Freshman Academy was "like a family." The respondents felt like the teachers cared about them, showed the relevance of what they were teaching, and used a variety of instructional strategies to maintain student interest. According to the participants, the improvements that could be made to the Freshman Academy program included aspects of the environment, teacher-student relationship, and curriculum and instruction.

McKenzie (2009) conducted a study to investigate the practices, programs, or interventions used in Missouri to assist freshmen in making a successful transition to high school. For this research, all high school principals across the state were given the opportunity to contribute to the study. There were 183 schools, both public and non-public, that responded to the survey. From the data, 60.1% of the participating Missouri high schools had a freshmen transition program in place. Format analysis led to the conclusion that a multi-dimensional approach was perceived as more successful than a single-practice approach. The impact of freshmen transition practices on attendance and graduation rates could not be determined because 78.1% of all the programs currently in place were reported to have been implemented within the previous five years.

Ringstaff (2008) focused on the successes and challenges small school (300-900 students) administrators and teachers experienced when designing, implementing, and sustaining their ninth-grade transition programs. The purpose of the study was to add valuable insight into the development and implementation of freshman transition programs. This study identified common and unique elements in the implementation designs of transition programs in four small high schools in the state of Virginia. Fifty-two teachers were surveyed and the four high school principals completed their questionnaires. Results

indicated that high school teams developing a freshman transition program should include teachers in the planning process, pre- high school activities for the incoming freshmen, the availability of catch-up courses, academic interventions, improving communication gaps, and using data to monitor student achievement.

Chapter #3: Methodology

3.1 Methodology of Research and Participants

The methodology of the research involved an interview with administrators or school counselors from twenty public high schools in twenty districts around the Kansas City Metropolitan area. The twenty school districts and their demographics are summarized in Appendix 1. These school districts were on both sides of the state line and varied in student population from 1,600 to over 28,000. The twenty districts had a combined population of over 215,000 students and represented sixty-three middle schools and forty-five high schools. The grade configurations of the high schools are noted in Appendix 1 as well. These districts included urban, suburban, and rural populations.

Phone interview were conducted with nineteen high school personnel. One high school wanted to conduct a personal interview instead of a phone interview. Building administrators and school counselors were interviewed in eighteen districts, and central office personnel were interviewed in the other two interviews. The interview questions are included in Appendix 2. A summary of the data was placed on a spreadsheet in Appendix 3. The data provided by schools was organized and sorted to see if patterns of responses could be observed. To ensure reliability of the data, the interview was conducted with the appropriate administrator that was responsible for at-risk retention programs in the school districts. Furthermore, to ensure validity, public school statistics and information from the Kansas and Missouri public education websites were reviewed to make sure the data received was accurate and current. The public information and statistics from each school district were found at <http://dese.mo.gov/> for the Missouri school districts and <http://www.ksde.org> for the Kansas school districts.

3.2 Research Questions

The first questions asked in the interview were descriptor questions for the research project. The first question asked was whether the district had a freshman transition program and how long they have had that program. The answers to these responses were placed in the appropriate place on the spreadsheet. Special attention was taken to note a pattern of implementation versus a random implementation.

The next series of questions pertained to curricula issues. The educators were asked if they were using a specific curriculum for freshman transition. If the answer was yes, they were asked for the name/company of the program. Furthermore, the survey was designed to find the specific components to each district's program. Some aspects that might be uncovered include: 1) does the program have freshmen only orientation?, 2) is there year-long support of freshmen, if so, how?, 3) is the schedule altered to meet freshmen needs (seminar, freshmen only classes)?, 4) is there a peer tutor/mentor component?, and 5) on what academic components (study skills, test-taking strategies, etc.) does the curricula focus? The responses are summarized in Appendix 3 which were used to observe any patterns of curricula implementation.

The next series of questions were used to analyze the specific goals of the program. These goals included, but were not limited to: reduce drop out rates, increase in graduation rates, improve attendance, decrease discipline problems, and improve academics. The survey asked for statistics and/or documented outcomes that each district could provide to strengthen claims that its goals were being realized. Once again, one of the goals of the descriptive study was to look for patterns in concerns, goals set, curriculum/procedures used,

and results among districts. These patterns of practice may be helpful and considered by other districts.

The fourth set of questions was financial in nature. With almost certain reductions in school funding, were programs being reconsidered. The study sought to uncover how much the programs cost and as well as expenses incurred by freshmen transition programs. Staffing of programs was another topic in the interview and the survey asked questions to analyze how many staff members or others were responsible for the program.

Finally, the last two questions allowed the interviewee an opportunity to share any other information that was not covered in the interview. Each interviewee was asked their professional opinion about their program. One hope of the research study was that each district that had a freshmen transition program could share its experience, positive or negative.

3.3 Data Collection

As stated before, all of data were placed in Appendix 3 under headings that correspond to the questions on the survey. The data was examined to look for patterns and to form conclusions about why the high schools and/or school districts were choosing to implement a freshmen transition program. Although there may be other factors associated with school improvement, a pattern of upward data trends in multiple districts could indicate that freshmen induction programs are helping freshmen transition into high school more effectively than without one.

3.4 Summary

A written summary of each high school's transition program is included in the findings. The survey questions addressed validity by being simple and precise. Leading questions were avoided. Ethically, permission was received from all district administrators and school personnel interviewed and they were informed that their answers would be published in the research findings. A narrative explaining the purpose of the survey and research was given to all interviewees. The administrators were informed that the research findings would be shared with them at the conclusion of the research. Furthermore, this project gained approval from the Human Subjects' Committee prior to implementation.

After the interviews had been conducted and noted on the spreadsheet, the findings were summarized into a research report per district. After the twenty summaries were written, a thorough analysis of the twenty districts' program was conducted. As noted, one goal of the research project was to be able to provide some insight and useful information for school districts by reviewing the Kansas City area school districts' freshmen transition programs. Was this reform movement of freshmen transition/induction programs working according to the data and survey answers that were collected? What patterns were common among schools? Was this a viable reform program to help combat the district's desired outcomes?

Chapter #4: School District Descriptions and Summaries

4.1 District #1¹:

District #1 is a rapidly growing school district in southwestern Johnson County, Kansas. District #1 has two middle schools with a 5th through 8th grade configuration. The two middle schools feed into one high school. The district has a student population of 4,600 students and the high school has an enrollment of around 1,200 students. Ethnically, 84% of the district is White, 3.5% is African-American, 5.5% is Hispanic, and 7% is of other ethnicity. Twenty-seven percent of District #1 is economically disadvantaged². The high school has had freshmen transition programming for ten years. The school has developed its own program and did not use a specific curriculum or purchased program. The high school has freshmen only attend on the first day of school. This allows freshmen to learn the physical layout, its routines, and its rules. District #1 also has freshmen only seminars throughout the school year. During seminar, hot topics are presented to the freshmen by upperclassmen serving as peer mentors. Topics include: tolerance of differences, time management, and study skills. The school also has social functions exclusively for the freshmen, such as tailgating during football season. Freshmen are separated on a wing of the school and most of the classes and lockers are segregated together.

The administrators and staff are targeting freshmen attendance, behavior, and grades as its primary goals. Although they have not collected formal data, the administrators and staff believe the program is helping to achieve these goals.

¹ district names were withheld from the summaries for the research study. If readers are interested in more information about a specific district, they are urged to contact the author.

² this student characteristic is determined by a student qualifying for free or reduced lunch at school

The program did not have a large start up cost as it was locally created. The district estimates that it spends \$2,000, annually. This covers first day expenses such as shirts and lunch. The school pays for these expenses out of its local activity fund account. It has twelve teachers and one administrator directly responsible for management of the program.

The high school has all 8th grade teachers and counselors develop a transition plan for each student that is entering 9th grade. These plans recommend freshmen classes, indicate which students should not be together, and list other behavior and academic concerns that would be helpful for the high school staff to have or be aware of. School personnel are beginning to look at a freshman to sophomore transition program because they strongly believe additional support is needed for this age group. The staff believes that once students have successfully completed their sophomore year they have the appropriate resources and support in place to make it to graduation. The administrator and staff at the high school believe its program is there to stay and it will continue to look at expanding the services they offered. The administrator stated that schools would be senseless if they did not have a freshmen transition program in place. It is an integral part of the school's success. Educators strongly believe the program has helped to create a better school environment in many respects.

4.2 District #2:

District #2 is a large school district in Johnson County, Kansas. The district has 28,000 students. It has seven middle schools with 7th and 8th grades. The students in these middle schools matriculate to five high schools. In this school attendance format, the same group students from a particular middle school may not attend the same high school. The high schools average around 1,800 students. The ethnic makeup for the district is 73%

White, 8% African-American, 11% Hispanic, and 8% other. Twenty-seven percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged.

The high schools have freshmen transition programs; however, each school can choose its own program. The only high school surveyed has had a freshmen transition program for three years. The curriculum is the Link Crew program. This freshmen orientation curriculum is created by the “Boomerangproject” located in Santa Cruz, California. The high school has all freshmen attend school the first day of school without the higher grades in attendance. This day focuses on acclimation activities and getting to know the school rules and regulations. Furthermore, the school has freshmen only seminars. This allows the school to discuss issues and topics with freshmen to aid in their success. They provide junior and senior mentors that lead discussions in these seminars and also are available to assist on the first day of school. High school counselors go to the middle schools in the previous spring and address the enrollment process and high school issues with all 8th graders.

The high school has instituted the program to help familiarize freshmen with the school mission, goals, and policies. It also wants to give students positive role models by partnering them with upper class mentors. The school has noticed that the number of discipline referrals have gone down in the past three years following implementation of the program. The program initially cost the high school \$7,500 to get three staff members trained in the Link Crew curriculum. They also incur a \$1,000 yearly expense for shirts and lunches for the participants on the first day of school. These annual expenses are paid for by the high school’s PTA organization. There are three teachers directly responsible for implementation and planning of the program. These three teachers meet throughout the

school year to make adjustments/modifications and develop curriculum and schedules for transition implementation and services.

District #2 is looking at expanding the program and has future plans for improving the transitional services offered. The administrator interviewed stated that there would be a large outcry from parents and students if the program disappeared. Staff consider it is absolutely essential to the success of their students.

4.3 District #3:

District #3 is located in Clay County, Missouri, northeast of the Kansas City metropolitan area. Currently, the 10,000 student district has two junior high schools, 8th and 9th grade, that feed into a 2,000 student high school. The high school transitions approximately 700 new sophomores every year. The district is in the process of transforming their grade configurations. In the near future, the district is going to create middle schools (7th and 8th grades) and have a 9-12 grade high school setting.

The district serves a student population that is 85.5% White, 7% African-American, 4.5% Hispanic, and 3% other. The district student population is 17.5% economically disadvantaged. It offers support services for its incoming sophomores. They have had transitional services for approximately ten to fifteen years. The district does not use a specific program, but does have many support services in place for transitioning sophomores. In August, all sophomores are invited to an orientation day. This allows students to meet their teachers and counselors, to have exposure to all school clubs and organizations, to obtain their schedules and to find their locker, and to go on a scavenger hunt at the school. Counselors go out to the junior highs in the fall and then again in the spring to help with enrollment. The high school also has a peer helper program for at-risk transitioning

sophomores. The school has sent twenty-seven at-risk junior and seniors through an intensive leadership training program. These students are paired with incoming at-risk sophomores in order to assist them with any concerns. The school staff believe that this program is worthwhile and it is an important early intervention. District #3 also has a student assistance team that involves community organizations to ‘wrap around’ transitioning at-risk students. They are also expanding their RTI (Response to Intervention) model to meet the academic and behavior needs of all sophomores.

The school personnel is striving to reduce the “fear factor” for incoming sophomores. Educators want to create opportunities and relationships with these students so the students know they care about them and the students find a sense of belonging. Often times, sophomores can feel lost, especially in a large school. By providing services and adult and student mentors, the district staff hopes to reduce the stressors of sophomores.

District #3 is committed to expanding the transitional services for its sophomores. Staff would like to expand summer school programs and to provide transportation and meals for students. They would also like to offer transportation for Saturday school and its after-school tutoring. The administration believes financial constraints are keeping these programs from reaching more students. The school is exploring the possibility of having the orientation day in August mandatory instead of optional. Advocacy seminars/adult mentors are another component that is on the horizon at the high school.

The school is piloting a new Marzano grading rubric for sophomores. It has found that sophomores are struggling upon entering high school. They come from two junior high schools that embrace the professional learning and other middle school concepts. When they enter high school, the structure at the high school is drastically different than what they have

previously experienced. School personnel are aware of this and want to continue to expand transitional support. The administration considers induction programs and services a sound reform model. They believe they should be continued and expanded as it is necessary to meet the developmental needs of students at this critical age. Without a program in place, the staff is confident they may lose some students.

4.4 District #4:

District #4 is located in southern Johnson County, Kansas. It has a student enrollment of approximately 26,000 students and currently has nine junior high schools with a 7th-9th grade configuration. The nine junior high schools feed into four high schools. The high schools average 1,500 students. The district will begin the 2010-2011 school year with nine middle schools (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) and four 9th through 12th grade high schools. The district student population is 76.5% White, 6% African-American, 9.5% Hispanic, and 8% other. Twenty percent of the student body is economically disadvantaged.

District #4 has an above average transient student population. With the current configuration, students diverge into different high schools. Students might be classmates in junior high, but go to different high schools. The district has developed a comprehensive 21st Century curriculum and programs at the high school level. This allows students to choose a career track and attend the high school that offers that track. Some of these programs include: culinary arts, animal health, aerospace and engineering, and business. The high schools offer transition programs for their sophomores and will offer similar induction programs for their freshmen when they re-configure in the 2010-2011 school year. They have had transition programs for three years.

The schools use the Link Crew curriculum. Each high school may have a different variation as it is up to each attendance center to determine what it offers to incoming students. High school counselors, staff, and current high school students go to the junior high schools for orientation and enrollment activities prior to the commencement of the transitional school year. The district also has implemented leadership programs at the junior high level that focus on transitioning to high school. The first day of school is devoted to entering students attending and experiencing the Link Crew orientation day. On this day, sophomores are paired with upperclassmen peer mentors. District #4 has implemented grade-level seminars. This allows staff and the student peer mentors to discuss topics with the sophomores and be advocates for the sophomores. The district has implemented social functions, such as tailgating, into its induction program to get more students accustomed to the school environment.

District #4 personnel use the induction program as a component of their MTSS (Multiple Tiered Support System) model. Staff are continuously implementing new intervention strategies and restructuring the school environment to meet the needs of students. The induction program has an academic component and the district's focus has been on transitioning the past three years. The district staff is aware of the need for sound induction and support services and does not want to lose any students because they were not supported or they did not feel connected to school. The district has not kept data but the administration acknowledges the outcomes they were hoping to achieve have been attained by their transition services. The Link Crew program cost approximately \$2,500 per person for training. Each building is responsible for the training costs. Tenth grade teachers,

counselors, and administration are directly responsible for implementation of these services for the sophomores.

District #4 has focused on transitions in its schools for the past three years. Its administration knows that support services must be in place during transitions. Buildings have action plans that include these services and the district has budgeted for them. The junior high schools also have a 7th grade transition program and will continue with 6th grade transition services after next year. The administration in the district believe transition programs should not disappear. Transition services help develop connections for students with school, staff, and other students. The program is built with transitioning students in mind and all decisions for programming of services are made with this rationale.

4.5 District #5:

District #5 is a rapidly growing school district in southeastern Johnson County, Kansas, which encompasses parts of Overland Park, Stilwell, Leawood, and Stanley. It has a student population of approximately 21,000 students. The district currently has eight 6th-8th grade middle schools and four 9th-12th grade high schools. The district will open their fifth high school in August 2010. The district has a student racial demographic of 83% White, 3% African-American, 2% Hispanic, and 11% other. Only five percent of the student population is economically disadvantaged.

Each high school has a transition program for incoming freshmen. The services have been in existence for ten years. Each high school in the district has developed its own program and has not purchased a pre-packaged curriculum. Beginning in December of the eighth grade year, all incoming freshmen come to their future high school for a welcome by staff and the administrative staff. They watch a video that has been developed by high

school students. The video highlights aspects of high school life and the organizations that freshmen can join. At this meeting, they meet upperclassmen mentors who take them into freshmen classrooms. They also hear from the freshmen core teachers and counselors. In January, eighth graders come back to the high school, with their parents, for freshmen orientation nights. During these meetings, incoming freshmen can sign up for clubs and activities. Also, in March, all coaches and sponsors go out to the middle schools to ask incoming freshmen to sign up for activities. In August, freshmen attend orientation on the first day of school. This day is devoted to presenting information about the school which allows students to become acclimated to the school setting. Freshmen are placed in freshmen-only seminars where hot topics, pertaining to academics and relationships, are presented throughout the year by the peer mentors.

The administration uses induction programs to inform incoming students about the high academic success the district has had and the opportunities that will be afforded to each of them during the upcoming four years. In district #5, a lot of effort and time is devoted to recruitment of incoming students. Within the district, students and parents have many options for private schooling. In the past, the district lost many top students to private schools. The district has continued to showcase its offerings during this induction program so it might retain students. The administrators recognize the program is working and they are beginning to retain more students than the district used to attract at the freshmen level. Each school is responsible for funding its program. Schools pay for lunch for their freshmen and other incidentals. This money comes from the school's gift fund.

The district wants to continue to expand its induction program. The administrator interviewed stated that attention should be devoted to testing every student as they enter high

school so they could be placed in appropriate classes. He noted that many times students are placed in the wrong classes and counselors and teachers are forced to make many changes, mid-semester, which may have been avoided if proper testing and placement would have taken place. The administrator further stated that he strongly believes the program is essential. It has to be done and is “too important” not to exist. By doing more pre-planning and being pro-active with supportive transitional services, the school is able to avoid issues and problems as students progress in their education. He also stated that parents appreciate the support given and that there would be a parental outcry if it was discontinued.

4.6 District #6:

District #6 is a growing school district in southern Johnson and Miami Counties, Kansas. In the past ten years, the district and community have continued to grow rapidly and it will continue to see student growth as more families move south out of the Kansas City metropolitan area. The district has 2,500 students and has a high school enrollment of approximately 600 students. There is one middle school, with a 6th through 8th grade configuration, which feeds into a single high school. The student population is 18% economically disadvantaged and has an ethnic makeup of 87% White, 3% African-American, 4% Hispanic, and 6% other.

The school district has had a freshmen transition program for the previous five years. The district uses the Link Crew curriculum but also uses some other resources for transitional services. The induction program begins with 8th grade meetings in the previous spring with high school counselors and staff. The first day of school is devoted to freshmen only. Incoming freshmen go through a full-day orientation. In the process, students learn more about their classmates, the high school, and its rules and policies. The freshmen are also

paired up with upperclassmen tutors and mentors that are their advocates for the remainder of the school year. The high school has freshmen-only seminars. During seminar, topics are presented to the freshmen which include: bullying, stereotyping, and academics. Tutoring is available from the peer mentors. The school has focused attention on the social aspects of transitioning and provides opportunity for social functions as well.

District #6 is striving to make provisions for all incoming freshmen in order to make a comfortable transition into high school. It has developed a program which targets the social aspect of schooling, attendance, behavior, and academics. The district is encouraged that so many upperclassmen want to participate as peer mentors and gain volunteer experience. Since the program started five years ago, attendance and tardy levels remain better than freshmen rates before it started. Earlier data showed that discipline referrals were reduced and academic performance was higher than previous freshmen classes. The school has trained staff through the Link Crew curriculum. Three teachers and one administrator have been trained in the program. The school uses at-risk dollars and Johnson County Drug and Alcohol grant money to run the program. Annual district expenses total \$2,500 to \$3,000.

With the success of the high school program, the middle school is exploring an independent transition program. The Link program is now a part of the culture and parents and students expect to go through it. The school used to have to advertise and send letters to parents. Now, parents and students know the freshmen experience will be the Link Crew experience. The school staff consider a high school transition program is an effective experience. The staff and community would never give it up because it is vital to help students transition into high school. The popularity of the program is growing. The school is getting more and more junior and seniors interested in being mentors and tutors. The buy in

and support from the district, school, students, and parents is present and the program will continue to expand to meet the needs of all incoming freshmen.

4.7 District #7:

District #7 is located in western Wyandotte County, Kansas. The district has experienced student population growth due to the explosion of the tourism and shopping venues in the vicinity. Currently, the district has 1,600 students. The high school serves 550 students. A single middle school feeds into one high school. The district has ten percent of its student population is economically disadvantaged and educates a 66% White, 22% African-American, 7% Hispanic, and 5% other student population.

The district has had a freshmen orientation program for eight to ten years. The district has not purchased any curriculum, but has developed its own orientation program. The eighth graders go through the enrollment process in the last week of March. During this time, they meet with counselors and discuss class options and schedules for their freshmen year. Incoming freshmen attend the high school the first day of school for one-half of a day. During this time, they are introduced to the staff and go to their classrooms and tour the building. The high school has instituted grade-level seminars so all freshmen are placed homogeneously. The school has instituted a rotating seminar format which is based on performance. This allows students who are struggling to be placed in their teachers' seminar classes for further help and support of the content. The school has a freshmen hallway where the freshmen have their lockers and core classes segregated from the rest of the student body.

District #7 strives to eliminate stress of incoming freshmen by providing support throughout the transition time. During the induction process, freshmen are able to place names with faces and to listen to expectations. The students are given a glimpse of how the

high school setting is drastically different from the middle school setting. The orientation process continues to evolve to meet the needs of students which changes with new mandates or changes in schedules. At this time, the high school is not looking to expand its induction program. The administration encourages an induction process and expects to continue to offer its current structure and format.

4.8 District #8:

District #8 is a 7,000 student district in Jackson County in Kansas City, Missouri. The district has two middle schools and two high schools. The middle schools are 6th through 8th grade and the high schools follow sequentially. The district serves a student population that is 76% economically disadvantaged. Student ethnicity is 12% White, 80% African American, 6% Hispanic, and 2% other.

The district provides transitional services for incoming freshmen and has had a formal transition program for the previous three years. It has supported a career exploration program for ten years. The district uses components of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program as its platform for its induction program. It has customized the program and also is involved in a six district career consortium with area school districts. The district has customized the program to include transition, study skills, and acclimation activities for its freshmen. One high school is also using components from the High Schools that Work initiative. This specific high school has a freshmen academy and has segregated the freshmen to a specific wing of the school.

The middle schools are using the Middle Schools that Work components. The district offers all eighth graders a course selection night in the spring semester preceding the freshmen year. All freshmen have an orientation in August for half of a day. During this

time, students are given a tour and meet their teachers and counselors. The school has a curriculum in place for each grade level and transitions are a big aspect of the freshmen curriculum. Once a week, freshmen attend an advisory program where a teacher can mentor them. This advisory-based program is a vital component to the district and its students which have the same teacher advisor over the entire educational time period. This allows students and teachers to build relationships. All freshmen are required to take a career connection course. This course uses a career inventory program and starts to have students thinking about their career paths and high school course offerings.

The district wants to provide rigor, relevance, and student relationships. Each student has a personal plan of study. This plan follows them or changes as they go through school. The plan is targeted to post-secondary goals and ambitions. Since the implementation of the program, grades and attendance have improved and discipline referrals have decreased. The cost to run the induction program is difficult to quantify as everything is interwoven into the financial structure of the high school. The school has a “lead team” made of primarily freshmen teachers and administrators that decide on further implementation and changes to the program.

District #8 is striving to make its larger high schools smaller. It continues to explore ideas and interventions to make this a reality. The district is reviewing the freshmen academy at the one high school and is reviewing data to see if this has been successful. If data supports success, the district will consider implementing freshmen centers and academies at both high schools. The administration believes that freshmen transition programs and services are a major complement of student success at the high school level. It further states that the programs are here to stay and they are very important. Through this

induction program, the district believes it has increased rigor, relevance, and relationships with all students. By doing this, they are better preparing their students for the future years of high school and their individual post-secondary plans.

4.9 District #9:

District #9 is a 2,400 student district in western Wyandotte County, Kansas. The district has a traditional 6th-8th grade middle school and a single comprehensive high school. The district has a student population demographic of 72% White, 9% African-American, 11% Hispanic, and 8% other. Thirty-seven percent of the district's students are economically disadvantaged.

The high school has been providing freshmen with transition services and support for five years. The district has not purchased a specific curriculum or program. Its freshmen academy consists of all freshmen attending the first day of school. On this day, the school has the freshmen do a scavenger hunt and related acclimation activities. High school counselors also meet with the 8th graders in the previous spring semester to go over the enrollment process.

District #9 has implemented a team approach to their freshmen program. It has two teams of core teachers and the same group of students has the same core group of teachers. These teams have common planning times and meet each Friday to discuss issues and concerns. The school has a designated time in their schedule called "Success Time." This occurs during seminar when students can get additional support and set goals or work on career exploration. The high school has established competitions between the two freshmen teams.

The school hosts over twenty-five competitions that focus on student involvement. These include extra-curricular events, college visits, and career components. The high school developed a leadership group of freshmen which is selected and trained in a four week leadership training session. These students help in seminars and in core classes as the year progresses. Junior and Senior National Honor Society students are tutors for freshmen during Success Time. All 8th graders have a transition class at the middle school to help with the upcoming transition year into high school.

District #9 is eager to gather as much support for incoming freshmen as they can with their induction program. It embraces a team effort and concept. It has implemented many interventions and has seen fewer failing grades, better attendance, and fewer disciplinary referrals since the program was instituted. The school district did create its own program, but did incur some costs as its staff visited schools in Iowa to see how they had brought the middle school concept to the high school level. Yearly expenses of \$1,000 were incurred for shirts, social functions, and training. Funds needed for the program are paid from a school activity fund. Two assistant principals, two counselors and eight core teachers are directly responsible for the program.

District #9 would like to continue to expand its current induction program. It would like to focus attention on state assessments and AYP during the freshmen and sophomore years and on careers/post-secondary plans during the junior and senior years. The district wants to expand support services to the sophomore level as it sees this as a struggle for many students. It supports the team approach and believes this collaborative approach has helped with many transitional issues. The administration feels that induction programs are imperative to the overall success for students, the school, and the community. Under current

No Child Left Behind mandates, AYP has forced schools to look at best practices or change programs if schools are not meeting certain benchmarks. The school staff thinks they have a 'best practice' in place and their program is here to stay. The program has, and will continue to have, a big impact on learning and on easing freshmen transitional stresses. Students, staff, and parents echo these statements and support the existing program.

4.10 District #10:

District #10 is a 4,000 student district in Jackson County, Missouri. The district has one 6th-8th grade middle school that feeds into a single 1,200 student high school. The district serves a student population that is 65% economically disadvantaged and is 28% White, 58% African-American, 12% Hispanic, and 2% other.

The district has had a transition program in place for incoming freshmen for the previous two years. The high school does not have a formal curriculum in place but is considering the purchase of the Link Crew program. The district has its counselors go to the middle school during the spring semester to visit with 8th graders about course descriptions and class offerings. The first day of school is designed as a freshmen orientation day. This half day of school is used to help familiarize the incoming freshmen with the school and to teach them about procedures and policies. Another component to District #10's induction program is an advisory-based seminar. This seminar is for freshmen to do their studies and to have time to listen and learn about success topics. Juniors and seniors are assigned to these seminars in order to interact with the freshmen.

District #10 realizes that freshmen need all the help they can get as they begin their high school career. The program is intended to help students with their schedule, lunch room procedures, lockers, and disseminate information about all the different types of

organizations and activities at the high school level. The administration considers the acclimation to high school important and knows that it needs to be supported by staff, parents, and students. Since the program is only in its second year, it is too early for the school to see statistical patterns of improvement. The school staff is interested in tracking data and is hopeful that the program will help improve attendance and academic performance. The entire staff is involved in the initiative and is actively looking at purchasing a pre-packaged curriculum and expanding the program.

The school district has a 6th grade transition program and has experienced positive results from it. The positive feedback from parents and staff is a reason that the high school is considering a full year's program and curricula. The staff believe providing support to freshmen transitioning to high school is a necessity and a sound reform model. For years, the district has witnessed a reduction in attendance and grades at this level. It wants to continue to expand the program to help minimize the fear and to help students make a positive transition. With these added supports in place, the school is hopeful it will mitigate some of the student negative consequences that they see at the freshmen level.

4.11 District #11:

District #11 is located in Jackson County, Missouri. This 5,000 student district has one middle school (grades 7 and 8) that feeds into one high school. The district serves students that are 43% economically disadvantaged, 83.5% White, 7% African-American, 6% Hispanic, and 3.5% other. The roughly 375 freshmen that enter the high school have many support services. The district has had a "9th grade center" for eight years. In the past three years, the district has transformed the program and the components it has put in place for freshmen. The district uses the High School 101 curriculum along with the Missouri

Connections Program. The latter provides resources for each student's development of an individual plan of study.

The high school has developed many other components and content for their freshmen. At the high school, the school has an all freshmen 9th grade center. In this center, the school embraces the team/middle school concept. It has three teams of teachers. The students have the same core teachers. This schedule has allowed the teachers to have common plan periods in order to have collaborative decision making opportunities. Freshmen have their own separate commons area, lunch, and lockers. The school strives to restrict interaction with upperclassmen as much as possible.

In the spring, the high school counselors meet with 8th graders to review the enrollment process. The high school hosts incoming students and parents for informational and enrollment nights. The day before school starts, all freshmen are invited to a freshmen orientation day. This day is devoted to acclimation activities. The high school has implemented freshmen social functions. Some of these include: tailgating, dances, and friendly competitions. The school has seminar times for freshmen. This extended learning opportunity has an academic, reading, and life skill focus. The life skill focus has finance, personal management, test taking skills, and relationship building components.

District #11 wants to develop a positive adult relationship with every incoming freshman. It asserts their extended learning opportunity is providing this advisory role for teachers and students. The school has tracked statistics the results are positive. Attendance is higher, discipline has fallen, and failing grades are lower since the inception of this intensive program three years ago. Some statistics include: truancy reports decreased from 190 to 32, long-term suspensions reduced from 17 to 8, class GPA increased from 2.34 to

2.53, and failing freshmen math grades went from 140 down to 47. Since many components are in place during the school day, the high school does not encumber any extraordinary expenses for the program. The core group of teachers, an administrator, and a single counselor are responsible for the program. They continue to develop, create content, and process this with the freshmen in the seminar setting.

As the budgets get tighter, District #11 is exploring multiple options. If the district reverts to a traditional class schedule (the school is currently on a block schedule), it would wipe out many of the existent freshmen transition components they currently offer. The district is exploring the possibility of creating a 9th through 12th grade transition plan. It wants to continue to lean on the Missouri Connections curriculum and to develop personal plans of study. The administration believes freshmen induction programs are a sound reform model. The school and students reap the rewards down the road with the support and services in place. It has achieved the desired outcome the school was after and they have teachers and the community onboard with the program.

4.12 District #12:

District #12 is a 10,000 student district in southern Platte County, Missouri. The district has two middle schools (7th and 8th grade) which feed into two high schools. The district is 78% White, 11% African-American, 6% Hispanic, and 5% other. It also serves a student population that is 22% economically disadvantaged.

The district has had a freshmen transition program for eight years. The district has not purchased a specific program, but has developed its own induction program. The preceding spring semester, high school counselors begin the enrollment process. Sponsors and coaches visit 8th graders and try to recruit incoming students into their organizations.

The district has a summer school program for incoming freshmen and a survival skills class is offered during the summer months for at-risk students. These classes are designed to give identified students a jump start on the upcoming freshmen year in high school. Freshmen attend school on the first day of school for an orientation day. They are then given their schedule and told about school policies and regulations. All freshmen are placed in freshmen only seminars. Each week this seminar/homeroom is a place in which freshmen can discuss different life skill or success topics. The school also employs junior and senior mentors to help with this process.

The district has an academic, attendance, and discipline outcome focus with their induction program. Although no statistics were provided, the administration thinks the program has helped in these areas. A freshmen teacher is given time to help plan induction and transition programs throughout the year. Also, teachers, administrators, and counselors are involved in the implementation process throughout the school year. The district incurs summer school and transportation costs to run their summer school program.

District #12 is currently exploring opportunities to make their induction program better. It is considering additional curriculum options and wants it to become more organized. Administrators do believe it is crucial for the success of incoming freshmen and that it is a sound reform model in public schools.

4.13 District #13:

District #13 is a 4,000 student district in Wyandotte County, Kansas. The district has one middle school, grades 7th and 8th, and one high school, grades 9th through 12th.

Demographically, 54% of the district is White, 11% is African-American, 23% is Hispanic,

and 11.5% is other. Sixty-five percent of the student population comes from an economically disadvantaged background.

The district has a freshmen transition program at the high school level which has been in place for the previous four years. The district has used a variety of curricula for its induction program. District #13 has employed Harry Wong's effective learning techniques and has also used Rick Dufour's professional learning communities' components. It has used the Bullseye Curriculum to help identify and prioritize the Kansas curricula standards to its local curriculum. The district uses district mapping of skills and has developed some of its own transitional elements. The school has purchased the Link Crew program and uses it on the first day of school for all freshmen. This freshmen orientation allows students to get acclimated with the building layout and procedures. Social functions have been implemented into the freshmen experience and the school plans social functions throughout the school year. The high school has established a freshmen wing for all freshmen core classes and lockers to segregate the freshmen from other students. Freshmen attend freshmen only seminars, twice per week. During this time, they discuss counseling and career strategies with other freshmen. Also, the school has developed "academic enrichment." This is a mandatory academic study hall for roughly fifty at-risk students. The school has developed a clear mission and all teachers in unison to help all students.

The district has targeted reducing the freshmen retention rate and office referrals. Before the program was implemented, the high school had a 40% freshmen retention rate. During the 1st year, the retention rate improved to 29%; the next year to 20%; the following year to 14%; and last year to 9%. Discipline referrals have also decreased during this time span. The district has many incentive programs for students and it rewards students for

quarterly academic success. These rewards are based on grades. The school district incurs yearly expenses to run the induction program. The administration estimates a \$4,000 annual expense for running the program and the after school enrichment service. This expense is paid from Title IV and at-risk funds. A group of approximately fifteen teachers plan and implement the programs throughout the school year.

The administration would like to continue to explore how the seminar curricula can be expanded. It would like it continue to have a career and academic priority. The school is considering expanding transitional programs for sophomores. The administration strongly considers the reform model a part of their learning culture. It serves a purpose and parents and student give positive comments about the 9th grade academy. They believe that it has provided an avenue for the school to give transitional support and services in a loving and caring manner.

4.14 District #14:

District #14 is a 20,000 student inner-city school district in Wyandotte County, Kansas. The district has eight middle schools, grades 6th through 8th, and five high schools. Four high schools are 9th through 12th and one high school is 8th through 12th. The district serves a student population that is 84% economically disadvantaged. The ethnic make-up of the district is 16% White, 42% African-American, 38% Hispanic, and 4% other. All high schools have freshmen induction programs.

The staff interviewed at one high school has had a formal program for eight years. The school has an International Baccalaureate Curriculum. The school has 7th graders, throughout the district, who apply to get accepted to the school. If accepted, the students are enrolled as 8th graders in the high school. The high school has changed its focus from being

exclusive to inclusive. It is attempting to provide services and induction programs in order to retain students and keep them from withdrawing or dropping out. The school has an orientation for all incoming students and parents in the fall. The first day of school is just for 8th graders. This day is for acclimation and for learning more about the Baccalaureate Curriculum. The school promotes advocacy as part of its culture and considers advocacy a part of its overall success. The school has developed 8th through 12th grade seminars. Students stay in these seminars for five years. They begin to build positive relationships with other students and with their teacher. The teacher is their advocate and works with students on goals and academic concerns.

The school is striving to reduce the attrition rate and to increase the number of students obtaining the International Baccalaureate diploma. The school has kept statistics and has been able to achieve its goals for these two areas. The school has staff directly responsible for transition programs. It breaks the staff into two components. 8th, 9th, and 10th grade teachers are the middle year community and 11th and 12th grade teachers are the diploma community. These two groups work together to insure a smooth transition and develop an individual course of study for each student.

The school would like to continue to formalize the middle year program and focus on the transitional and academic needs of 8th through 10th grades. The administrator stated transition services are a sound reform model and that it will be around for a long time. The school will continue to refine the support services to meet student needs and any future state and federal mandates.

4.15 District #15:

District #15, located in Platte County, Missouri, is a 3,200 student district and has a 900 student high school, 9th through 12th grades. A single high school has two lower schools that feed into it; one is a traditional (6-8) middle school and the other is a K-8 school. Ethnically, 78% of the student population is White, 11% is African-American, 6% is Hispanic, and 5% is other. Twenty-two percent of students in the district are economically disadvantaged.

The school is in its first year of providing a transitional program for its incoming freshmen. The school has modeled its orientation day after the Link Crew program. Although the district did not purchase the program, due to financial constraints, it has implemented a similar program. The district employs an 8th and 9th grade counselor to assist with the transitional services for all freshmen. This counselor goes into the 8th grade classrooms once a month. During these meetings, the counselor discusses high school needs and any issues or concerns the 8th graders may have. The counselor is available to meet with freshmen teachers during the first year of high school. Thigh school has a parent/student meeting in March for all 8th graders. During this time, students are given their schedules and allowed to tour the building.

On the first day of school, only freshmen attend school for the orientation. The day starts with a pep rally with cheerleaders and the band. The school has twenty-five junior and seniors serve as peer mentors for this orientation day. Peer mentors serve as role models and take the 8th graders through team building activities. During the school's seminar time, the peer mentors meet with the 8th graders to discuss issues and concerns. Each incoming 8th grader is involved in the Missouri Connections independent plan of study. In this program,

each student completes a four year plan of study that is updated as they complete coursework. The high school also has periodic social functions for freshmen throughout the school year.

Through the transition program, District #15 is hoping to help freshmen find a sense of belongingness. Incoming students can get lost and the staff believes it is important for them to be able to identify with a peer mentor as soon as they begin school. The school is interested in improving student attendance, discipline, and academics. The school will be monitoring and tracking pre and post transition program statistics to see if implementation of the induction program is helping achieve the school district's goals. The school district is currently seeking grant money to help fund its transitional programs. It needs financial support for t-shirts and supplies. With added financial support, the school would be interested in expanding transitional services.

District personnel are excited about offering an induction program to freshmen. They want to keep building the program. They are eager to see the pre and post statistics for the program. Staff concur a freshmen transition program is vital to the overall success of students' high school years and post-secondary plans. Although in its infancy, the district's induction program wants to build on its first year's success and continue to look at expanding its services to all freshmen for years to come.

4.16 District #16:

District #16 is an 18,000 student district in Clay County, Missouri. The district has five middle schools, housing 6th through 8th graders. These five middle schools feed into four high schools. Forty-one percent of the students in District #16 are economically

disadvantaged. District #16 educates a student body that is 70.5% White, 13.5% African-American, 10% Hispanic, and 6% other.

District #16 has a formalized transition plan, and each high school has an induction program for freshmen. The school interviewed in the district has had a formal freshman transition program for two years. It receives their freshmen from three feeder middle schools. This makes the transition piece vital as many new faces are coming together for the first time. The school begins meeting with the 8th graders in the spring to discuss schedules, diploma options, and the Missouri Connections individual course of study plan for each student. It offers enrollment nights in the spring for the students and parents to attend. Later in the spring, the school hosts an activity night where parents and students can visit with coaches and sponsors from the high school.

The first day of school is dedicated for freshmen only. This half day orientation is a way for incoming freshmen to learn about the high school's policies and expectations. The school has a pep rally and an assembly to showcase the school's offerings and school pride. Throughout the year, it uses senior mentors and peer helpers to aid incoming freshmen with academic and social concerns. Freshmen have an advisory time four days a week, for twenty minutes. The students stay with their academic advisor for four years and build a bond with this teacher during this time. Also, the school employs professional learning communities to identify and brainstorm support services for the freshmen. These teams include a student assistance team and a TIP (transitions, interventions, personalization) team. Through these teacher action teams, many ideas and interventions have been developed to help support incoming freshmen. Summer school is used to help springboard the freshmen into their high

school year. Students can take courses in the summer preceding their freshmen year to allow a jumpstart on their education.

The school is hoping to have a higher student graduation rate with the interventions they have put in place. Staff track students for all four years and continually monitor students to see if additional support is needed. The school specifically tracks the top ten and bottom ten percent of freshmen to identify common issues of concern. They want to provide services for the bottom tier of students, but still provide acceleration and post-secondary services for the top tier of students. Since the program has been implemented, discipline referrals have been significantly less and teacher surveys, conducted three times a year, are much more positive.

The TIP team is the group of staff members directly responsible for the transition program and the curriculum implementation. This group of sixteen teachers and staff develop topics and resources during early release time throughout the school year. The team is targeting attendance. They interview students to see what specific issues that can be addressed. The administration believes teacher-led collaboration is one of the biggest reasons for the positive differences the past few years. The school employs a school community resource specialist who works with freshmen and their families during the transitional time into high school. The district does have annual expenses, such as substitute costs and transportation, but the staff states that each dollar spent towards this program is money well spent.

The school is looking at the AVID program and would like to get all staff members trained. This program is expensive and the school has not been able to afford this program. Also, some staff have been trained in the Boy's Town Model. The hope would be to get all

staff members trained in this program, as well as those at the middle schools. Since this model has been implemented, the school has seen a significant decline in office referrals. The administration thinks that a successful transition program should not just target freshmen, but students should be followed for all four years. Administration and staff know it has been a systematic change to help all students and the system is continuing to change. The administration states the program is important and does not foresee it disappearing. Students are given support, advice, and opportunities that each student needs as he/she enters high school.

4.17 District #17:

District #17 is in Jackson County, Missouri. The school has three middle schools, grades 6th through 8th grade, and two high schools in the 9,000 student district. District #17 has a student demographic of 45% White, 45% African-American, 8% Hispanic, and 2% other. Also, 50% of the student body is economically disadvantaged.

The school district has many transitional supports in place for incoming freshmen. During the 8th grade year, the school offers two 8th grade academic/activity nights. These nights are designed to showcase both academics and activities. In April, students and parents are invited back to school to take a tour of the building and find their classes. At-risk 8th graders are identified and these students take summer school classes. About 85 students attend summer school and take classes to learn what high school is about and how to be successful and feel connected. In early August, the freshmen have a day to themselves for enrollment and orientation. Furthermore, all freshmen enroll in a Connections Class. This class is designed to help them as they transition throughout the school year. The school has an advisory time built into the schedule. Each freshman stays with an advisory-teacher for

four years. A group of teachers have created a curriculum that is taught to freshmen once a week during this time. The topics include team building, bullying, and other success topics. The school also uses student tutors to help with freshmen students who are struggling academically.

The staff is trying to target the need for support for each incoming freshman. Teachers and administration understand that students are coming from a 'social promotion' system into a credit system. This is a big change and the expectations of high school must be instilled into each student. Also, school personnel believe that providing each student with an adult to be an advisor for four years has led to significant academic gains. Since the program has been implemented, the school has had a higher graduation rate and the drop out rate has declined. The school has four staff members, three teaches and one counselor who are directly responsible for the curriculum and other support services that are in place at the school. The school devotes a small budget for the advisory time and other supplies needed for activities.

Expanding the induction program is a current goal of the administration. They want to focus more intently on the beginning of the year and try to get a full orientation day in place for freshmen students. The administrators think that an induction program is vital and here to stay. It is important to develop positive relationships for each student. The school staff knows that they have to help students and can not lose students because of lack of services or relationships. Tracking students and identifying the at-risk students has also proved to be a successful intervention. As the school continues to expand the program, the staff hopes they will continue to witness positive student outcomes.

4.18 District #18:

District #18 is the fastest growing school district in Kansas. The district has over 6,400 students and is in western Johnson County, Kansas. There are three middle schools and two high schools. Each high school receives students from one middle school and the third middle school is split; half of the 8th graders attend one high school and the other half of students attend the other high school. Thirteen percent of the district's students are economically disadvantaged. Demographically, 85.5% are White, 3% are African-American, 6% are Hispanic, and 5.5% are other.

District #18 is in its second year of offering an induction program for freshmen. In the spring semester, counselors visit with the three middle schools to begin the transition/enrollment process. In January or February, parent nights are held at the high schools. The school funds a summer school program to aid remediation and enrichment in math and science. The first day of school is for freshmen only. In the morning, the incoming freshmen have a pep assembly and fun activities planned by the student council. In the afternoon, students go through a mock schedule and find their classes and other areas of the school. The school has invested time and money into the "Learning from the Heart" curriculum. It also has implemented Harry Wong's research and methodology. Freshmen are enrolled in freshmen-only seminars. During the course of the year, ninth graders are presented sessions on varying topics of high school. Furthermore, junior and seniors are providing assistance to freshmen as mentors and/or tutors. The school has set up a freshmen wing, and the majority of the freshman core classes are in this wing. The high school uses a team approach with its core teachers, and each student has the same core teachers throughout the school year.

The school is trying to be pro-active in its approach to all incoming freshmen. The administration and staff want to enhance ownership and involvement in the school and decrease disassociation. They are keeping pre and post data on extra-curricular involvement, attendance, and academics. In the short amount of time they have had the program, the staff thinks it is helping support the freshmen. The program is implemented by the core freshmen staff, and it continues to evolve from the new ideas of this group. The school values the information and research they have gathered from Harry Wong, but it is expensive to get more staff members trained.

Knowing that the program is not as successful as they would like it to become, administrators want to continue to expand the freshmen transition program. The school and staff get overburdened by the No Child Left Behind and AYP requirements, and some important transitional supports can get overshadowed. The staff states this is a sound reform model and it has improved performance. They want it to continue to improve and have seen positive changes and responses from students, staff, and parents. Staff has been able to identify at-risk students and have given them the proper services and support they need before it is too late. Their goal is to help kids get prepared for the next level, and they feel like this program is achieving this mission.

4.19 District #19:

District #19 is a large, growing school district in Jackson County, Missouri. With a current student enrollment of 17,500, the district has three high schools and three middle schools. The middle schools house students in 7th and 8th grade and the high schools have a 9th through 12th grade configuration. Demographically, the school district serves a student

population that is 81.5% White, 12.5% African-American, 4% Hispanic, and 2% other and 13.4% of its student population is economically disadvantaged.

The district has had a freshmen transition program implemented for ten years. All three high schools have very similar approaches to their induction programs. The district uses a transition curriculum that is in the student planners. This curriculum has been developed by a committee of teachers and evolved throughout the ten years. In the spring, high schools host 8th graders during an 8th grade orientation night. This is followed up by the high school counselors going to the middle schools to visit with 8th grade classes. The school requires each student and parent to have an enrollment conference with a counselor. The school employs the Missouri Connections program to help every student create an individual course of study for high school.

At-risk students are asked to attend summer school for remediation classes before school begins. Also, freshmen can take classes for acceleration of classes in the summer. In August, the school hosts an open house night for parents and students to come to the high school to meet their teachers and explore the building. The freshmen have a half day freshmen transition day the first day of school. This day begins with an assembly and pep rally. Then, the students go through their schedule and eat lunch. Freshmen have their own hall and lockers in the school. The school has a mentoring/advisory program that all students are involved with at the high school level. The students are exposed to a locally developed curriculum.

District #19 is striving to help all incoming freshmen feel connected to the school. They feel the orientation is beneficial and allows each freshman and his or her parents to meet staff and familiarize themselves with the school staff and school procedures. Also, it

allows each freshman to begin establishing a positive relationship with an adult mentor. This mentor will advise them for four years through graduation. The school employs student and parent surveys about the program. These surveys have been positive and show signs that the program is achieving its goals. The school has yearly expenses for the 1st day of school. These expenses include shirts, prizes, and lunch. The expenses are paid for by local business partners and the district. The school has a lead teacher and a staff committee who plan the events and the yearlong curriculum for the freshmen.

District #19 wants to continue to expand transitional services into the sophomore year. The school staff states that they have provided many resources and implemented supports for the freshmen level, but now are experiencing academic concerns at the sophomore level. They have implemented a learning lab for failing students. This learning lab is a place where students can get additional time and support for the classes in which they are struggle. The lab is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The district believes a freshmen induction program is a sound reform model. The school administrators have advocated for a transition program for a long time. It is ongoing and it will continue to evolve to meet the student needs. It is important that each incoming freshmen is able to make a positive connection with an adult mentor. Parents, students, and staff have responded to surveys with positive reviews.

4.20 District #20:

District #20 is a 14,000 student school district in Jackson County, Missouri. The school district has three high schools and four middle schools. Each high school (grades 9-12) has one feeder middle school (grades 6-8). The fourth middle school is split and each high school gets a third of the 8th graders from the middle school. The district serves a

student population that is 55% economically disadvantaged and demographic breakdown as follows: 75% White, 11% African-American, 11% Hispanic, and 3% other.

The school district has had a freshmen induction program for five years. The school begins the transition process in January with pre-enrollment nights. These workshops allow students and parents to find out answers to their questions and concerns. The 8th graders then come to the high schools in February for several enrollment nights. The school district also has a half-day elective fair where 8th graders are bussed to the high school. During this event, the students rotate through elective teachers' classes and also have the opportunity to learn about the extra-curricular activities the school offers. In May, selected 9th through 12th graders go to the middle schools and visit with 8th graders about questions they may have about high school. The school uses the Missouri Connections individual course of study for each student. Summer school is available for incoming freshmen for remediation and advancement.

During the entire transition process, there is ongoing communication, and the school staff believe this has helped alleviate many stressful concerns and fears. Also, the 8th grade teachers attend many of these events. The district believes this has helped tremendously as the 8th graders know and have built a relationship with their 8th grade teachers. In August, the freshmen come to the high school for a freshmen orientation day. This day is to gain a familiarity of the school and learn the rules and regulations. The students are given a tour and go through their schedules. The school uses a freshmen focus teacher advisory program. Freshmen meet with their focus teacher once a week for thirty minutes. During this time, students visit with teachers about different topics from a scripted curriculum. This grade level seminar allows advising and mentoring to take place on a regular basis. Senior student

mentors are assigned to these seminars and work with the freshmen throughout the year with their studies and any other concerns the freshmen may have.

District #20 is striving to increase attendance and the graduation rate of its incoming freshmen classes by implementing the support services of their freshmen transition program. The school staff wants each student and parent to know the “ins’ and outs’” of high school and to know the purpose of a high school education. Finding and building a positive relationship with a freshmen advisor is also a key component of the program. Staff has kept statistics and have seen an increase in attendance, and the school has seen a higher graduation rate.

The school is able to fund the transition program because of two federal grants. These two grants are the High Schools that Work Grant and the Smaller Learning Communities Grant. With the two million dollars from these grants, the school has been able to employ staff members to work directly with freshmen transition. One specific staff member employed through the grant is a Smaller Learning Community Coordinator. The school also has intensive staff development and many site visits. Five teachers are also directly involved in planning, curriculum implementation, and evaluation. This group meets regularly, and they also meet every six weeks with the 9th grade advisors to discuss the program.

District #20 has tried to make a large school smaller by dividing it into five houses. Each house has roughly 350 9th through 12th graders. The students stay in the same house for all four years and take many classes from the same teachers. The school district believes that this approach of making a large school into smaller schools has worked effectively. The freshmen transition services and program are now a part of the culture in the district. Parents

have expectations for the program and students look forward to it as well. The administrators believe the freshmen transition program is a sound reform model that will not be going away. Many other schools have looked at the District #20 for ideas on freshmen support services. The program has changed immensely, but the staff believe they have a strong and supportive program in place for helping each student transition into high school.

Chapter #5: Analysis of the Freshmen Induction Programs in Twenty School Districts

5.1 Analysis of Districts

The twenty school districts in the research study range in size from 28,000 students to 1,600 students. The district mean size was 10,705 students. The twenty school districts have a combined total of sixty-five middle schools and forty-six high schools. Grade configurations vary among the districts at the middle and high school levels. The most common grade configuration at the middle school level was 6th through 8th grade. Twelve school districts had this grade level configuration, while five districts had a 7th and 8th grade configuration. One district had 5th through 8th at their middle schools, one had 7th, 8th, and 9th grade, and one district had 8th and 9th grade. Eighteen districts had the transition program from middle school to high school between grades eight and nine. Two districts had the transition from 9th to 10th grade with one of the two districts moving its 9th graders to the high school level for the 2010-2011 school year. Six school districts were in Johnson County, Kansas; four were in Wyandotte County, Kansas; six districts were in Jackson County, Missouri; two were in Clay County, Missouri; and two districts were in Platte County, Missouri. Student demographic information, such as ethnicity and economically disadvantaged, were noted in the study and can be found in Appendix #2.

5.2 Common Concerns/Motivations Among Districts

When asked about the specific aspects each school district was targeting with a freshmen transition program, administrators responded with a variety of responses. All school districts wanted to help support the incoming freshmen through the transitional process. Having a successful orientation program was thought to be a critical component to the districts' programs and overall success. School personnel believed that student

knowledge of the school layout and the procedures were vital to reducing the stress level of freshmen. Ten high schools stated a motivation to begin a freshmen transition program was to help acclimate the incoming freshmen into the high school setting and familiarize the freshmen with the new educational setting.

Overall, responses indicated that districts had implemented a freshmen induction program to help ease the stress and concerns of the transition into high school. All districts started the enrollment process in the spring semester of the preceding school year. This process involved counselor visits to the middle schools, parent and student nights, and middle school visits to the high school. Also, all districts had an orientation day in August to help acclimate students into the high school setting.

Eleven high schools had concerns about grades, attendance, and discipline and wanted to address these issues through a freshmen transition program. The administrators felt components of the program and the support given during this time may help in these areas of concern. Another common concern, primarily in the inner-city school districts, centered around the notion of providing an advisor for each incoming student. Nine school districts believed in establishing a positive relationship with an adult mentor/advisor early in the transitional period. In most districts, this point person was the freshmen seminar teacher. This advisor worked with the students, and in most cases, was the student's advisor for all four years. Advocacy and adult advisors were common elements in the inner-city, low socioeconomic, and high minority school districts. These districts reported that having a caring and nurturing adult for each student was helping improve the outcomes of their program. The administration in these districts stated that many students do not have a solid adult/mentor figure in their life. By establishing a routine and an adult relationship for each

freshman, the student's engagement in school and his/her success rate was higher. Districts of higher economic status stated their program was more for acclimation and orientation purposes than to help increase the graduation rate and reduce student retention. The latter were objectives seen in lower socio-economic districts.

Several districts commented on the importance of creating support opportunities to develop a sense of belonging for the freshmen. These districts were concerned about disassociation of the incoming class and wanted the students to know they are supported in high school. One district was concerned about recruitment of students and retaining their freshmen class. This district, found in an affluent suburb of Kansas City, had noticed a loss of students from 8th to 9th grade. After investigating the situation, the district found that many students were going to some of the parochial and private schools in the area. Their attention has now turned to implementing transitional services and support to keep more students in their public school district.

5.3 Goals Targeted by Each District:

As noted, eleven districts that were interviewed noted they had implemented the program to help decrease discipline and increase attendance and academics. Schools were concerned about low attendance and also a high number of tardies at the freshmen level. Four school districts stated that one of the program's objectives/goals was to increase the graduation rate and decrease the drop out rate. These four districts were in lower socio-economic districts. The districts had a 50%, 55%, 65%, and 84% economically disadvantaged student population. Also, these four districts had a higher minority population than the other seventeen school districts interviewed.

Two districts wanted to target the increase rigors and academic changes of high school. The high school setting is drastically different than many middle schools, and the districts know students need to be supported as they experience this difference in academic standards.

Twelve districts stated they had implemented the program to help with increase academics and attendance and decreasing school discipline at the freshmen level. Districts that had kept data on pre-induction statistics vs. post-induction statistics were pleased with the results. All twelve districts reported their attendance and academics had improved and discipline referrals had decreased. One district saw their freshmen retention rate drastically reduced since they instituted a freshmen transition program. Before the program was implemented, 40% of the freshmen class was being retained. The retention rate had decreased over a four year period and last year it was only 9%. Other schools stated their graduation rates were increasing and discipline problems were decreasing. Districts that conducted surveys with their parents, students, and staff received positive feedback regarding the program.

Several other unique aspects of the district transition programs surfaced. One district employed a School/Community Resource Specialist. This staff member worked closely with families and social service agencies to get students and families the support they needed. Another district embraced the Response to Intervention concept with its freshmen and had an active Student Assistance Team and Wrap Around program in place. One school had a leadership class and was striving to train future leaders to help with the transition of future freshmen. Several districts in Missouri had junior and senior tutors that were able to gain community college hours for their time and service. Finally, two districts had college visits

in the curriculum and required freshmen to make college visits to allow them to begin thinking about their post-secondary plans.

A chart indicating major goals of each district can be found on the next page.

5.4 Chart Summarizing the Major Goals of Transition Programs

Goals of Each Freshmen Transition Program

| | Support freshmen transition | Decrease Discipline | Increase Attendance | increase Academics/GPA | Increase graduation rate | Establish positive relationship with adult | Other |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------|
| District #1 | X | X | X | X | | | |
| District #2 | X | | | | | | |
| District #3 | X | | | | | | |
| District #4 | X | X | X | X | | | |
| District #5 | X | | | | | | X |
| District #6 | X | | X | | | | |
| District #7 | X | | | | | X | |
| District #8 | X | X | X | X | | | X |
| District #9 | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| District #10 | X | | | | | X | |
| District #11 | X | X | | | | X | |
| District #12 | X | X | X | X | | | |
| District #13 | X | X | | | X | | |
| District #14 | X | | | | X | | |
| District #15 | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| District #16 | X | | | | X | | |
| District #17 | X | | | | | X | X |
| District #18 | X | | | | | X | X |
| District #19 | X | | | | | X | X |
| District #20 | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| | 20 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 5 |

5.5 Curriculum/Procedures Used to Achieve Goals

Nine districts have purchased a curriculum or program to use with their incoming freshmen. Five of the districts had purchased the Link Crew program for their orientation day and several other districts were looking at purchasing Link Crew in the near future. One district was using components of Harry Wong's classroom management curriculum. Another high school was using the adopted curriculum of their student planner. The planner has different activities and curriculum in it pertaining to transitions and student success tips at the high school level. One district had purchased the High Schools and Middle Schools that Work curriculum and another was using High School 101. Eleven districts had not purchased a commercial curriculum, but had developed its own curriculum for freshmen induction programs. The nine districts that were using a purchased curriculum were still using individual elements that were tailored to their district and student needs. Many of the districts had a committee of teachers and staff, or a lead teacher/coordinator who developed and implemented a scripted curriculum. This curriculum was for the first day of school and, for many schools, for sessions throughout the school year.

5.6 Possible Evidence of Achievement of the Desired Outcomes

Statistically, all the districts that had kept data on their freshmen transition outcomes reported positive results. In the districts that wanted to target attendance and academics, the high schools reported higher attendance/lower tardies and fewer failing grades. If districts were interested in decreasing discipline, the high schools reported fewer office referrals after their induction program was implemented. In the districts that were concerned about their poor graduation rates, administrators stated that their graduation rates had improved since

implementation of the program. One district had decreased their freshmen retention rate from 40% to 9% over a four year period. One district that was targeting student involvement had seen an increase in student participation in extra-curricular activities since they started the induction program. Three districts conducted surveys to gauge the effectiveness of the program. On these surveys, parents, students, and staff commented positively that the program was beneficial for the transitioning freshmen. Many administrators stated that they were going to begin keeping more student data to see if there was a correlation between having a freshmen transition program and positive student outcomes. Several commented this was becoming a requirement due to better accountability with state and federal monetary aid coming into the district to support at-risk programs.

5.7 Comparing Data and Induction Program Attributes Among Districts:

All twenty districts are currently using some form of freshmen induction program at the high school level. The years of implementation varied among the districts. District freshmen transition programs ranged from one to ten years with the mean of 5.74 years of implementation for the districts.

Although all twenty districts had a freshmen transition program, each district had different components for their induction of freshmen. Each district interviewed had the transition begin in the spring semester before the freshmen enter high school. Every district had its counselors go to the middle schools and visit about the enrollment process with the incoming freshmen class. Four districts had high school students go to the middle schools to visit with the incoming students about their specific concerns. Three districts had the incoming freshmen class come to the high school in the spring for an orientation time. For

many students, this was the first time they had been to the high school that they would be attending the next four years.

Ten districts held several informational and activity nights in the spring semester. These nights allowed students and their parents to come to the school and get further acclimated and ready for their freshmen year. Activities on this night included but not limited to the following: finishing the enrollment process, visiting with teachers, taking a tour of the building, signing up for different activities and clubs, and getting any questions or concerns answered. One district required each incoming student and his/her parents to set up a required meeting with a high school counselor in the spring semester. The administrators in this district felt like this was an important part of transitioning the student and building a positive relationship with each student. Another district created a leadership and transition class at each middle school to help students get ready for the next level. The staff believed this class was helping many at-risk students prepare for high school. Seven districts provided summer school opportunities for incoming freshmen. The course offerings were designed for remediation of basic skills, high school survival classes, and acceleration of high school course material so a freshmen could free up his/her schedule to enroll in other classes.

All twenty districts held a Freshmen Orientation Day in August. Five districts used a half school day, and fifteen districts used an entire school day for freshmen orientation. The majority of districts had the freshmen only orientation the first day of school. Two districts offered the orientation day as optional, and eighteen districts made it mandatory and built their day into its school year. This day varied greatly among the districts. All districts used

some of the day for orientation to the school and for exposure to school rules and policies. Also, districts used this time for students to go through their schedules, find their classrooms and lockers, and learn the lunch procedures. Roughly half of the districts implemented social components into the orientation day. These social aspects included pep rallies, scavenger hunts, and team building activities. Twelve school districts used student mentors/leaders on the orientation day to help freshmen learn the layout of the school and lead the social functions of the day.

A freshman seminar time during the day was another common component. Eighteen districts had a class schedule that placed students in freshmen-only seminars. This seminar time allow the staff to convey information and teach lessons to freshmen throughout the year. Topics that districts address during this time include understanding bullying, stereotyping, study skills, and other topics that help make high school students successful. Districts that provided this support during seminar had a scripted curriculum that was usually developed by a group of teachers or a lead coordinator. Seventeen of the districts employed upperclassmen to be tutors and mentors for the freshmen in the seminar period. Another common aspect among the districts was having an advisory-based seminar. Not only are students assigned a seminar for study hall purposes, but twelve districts focus on establishing a relationship between an adult teacher and the incoming freshman. This advisor works with the freshmen throughout their first year, and the students stay with the same seminar advisor for all four years of high school.

Six districts had social functions for freshmen during the school year. These social functions included the following: tailgating at a football game, a talent show, a dance, and

other freshmen mixer activities. All ten Missouri school districts interviewed used the Missouri Connections curriculum plan of study for all freshmen. This individual plan allowed each school's staff to understand student's career interests and tailor the student's course offerings towards their career interests. This plan is continually updated and can be changed as a student changes his or her career focus.

Eight school districts had incurred additional cost associated with implementing a freshmen transition program in their high schools. The costs ranged from a few thousand dollars to large amounts of grant money being spent on induction programs. The districts spent additional money on supplies, shirts, lunches, substitute teacher salaries, transportation, curriculum, social functions, staff development, school tours, and training. These additional costs were paid in a variety of ways. Activity funds, Title money, grants, PTA, donations, business partners, and the school's general fund were all means by which schools were able to pay for additional services and programs. As far as staffing, each school had personnel who were designated to help with the implementation and programming of the induction program. This staff included administration, teachers, coordinators, and counselors. Two districts employed a coordinator specifically for freshmen transitioning. Many districts had a committee or team designed to coordinate programming and curriculum scope and sequence.

During the interviews, many districts revealed unique aspects to their individual induction programs. One district employed an 8th/9th Grade Counselor. This counselor worked solely with these two grades and worked entirely on transition and support for each student. Two districts required each freshman to enroll in a career connection course. Here, students were exposed to all types of careers and the requirements and outlook of each job.

Four districts utilized the middle school teaming concept and were using elements of it at the high school level. Aspects of this program included students having the same core teachers and teachers having common team and department plan times. Five districts restructured their building and placed freshmen in a segregated wing/hall where they had all core classes together. One district had a freshmen center where students were housed in a separate building.

5.8 Charts summarizing the major components of each district's program can be found on the next three pages.

Components of Freshmen Transition Programs

| | Have a transition program | Transition day in August | Half-day transition | Full-day transition day | Purchased curriculum | Spring enrollment with counselors | Social functions |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| District #1 | X | X | | X | | X | X |
| District #2 | X | X | | X | X *Link Crew | X | X |
| District #3 | X | X | | X | | X | X |
| District #4 | X | X | | X | X *Link Crew | X | X |
| District #5 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| District #6 | X | X | | X | X *Link Crew | X | X |
| District #7 | X | X | X | | | X | |
| District #8 | X | X | X | | X *High Schools the work | X | |
| District #9 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| District #10 | X | X | X | | | X | |
| District #11 | X | X | | X | X *High School 101 | X | |
| District #12 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| District #13 | X | X | | X | X *Link Crew | X | X |
| District #14 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| District #15 | X | X | | X | X *Link Crew | X | |
| District #16 | X | X | X | | | X | |
| District #17 | X | X | | X | | X | X |
| District #18 | X | X | | X | X *Harry Wong | X | |
| District #19 | X | X | X | | X *Student Planner | X | X |
| District #20 | X | X | | X | | X | |
| | 20 | 20 | 5 | 15 | 9 | 20 | 8 |

Components of Freshmen Transition Programs

| | High school visits in Spring | Informational nights | Seminar discussions | Tutors/Mentors | Summer school | Freshmen-only seminars | Advisory-based seminar |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| District #1 | | | X | X | | X | |
| District #2 | | | X | X | | X | |
| District #3 | | X | | X | | | |
| District #4 | | | X | X | | X | |
| District #5 | X | X | X | X | | X | X |
| District #6 | | | X | X | | X | X |
| District #7 | | | X | | | X | X |
| District #8 | | X | X | | | X | X |
| District #9 | X | | X | X | | X | X |
| District #10 | | | | X | | X | X |
| District #11 | | X | X | | X | | |
| District #12 | | | X | X | X | X | |
| District #13 | | | X | X | | X | X |
| District #14 | | | X | X | | X | X |
| District #15 | | X | X | X | | X | |
| District #16 | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| District #17 | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| District #18 | | X | X | X | X | X | |
| District #19 | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| District #20 | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | 3 | 10 | 18 | 17 | 7 | 18 | 12 |

Components of Freshmen Transition Programs

| | Missouri Connections | Middle school aspects | Transition counselor | Freshmen center | Restructured building | Career Connections class | Mandatory parent meeting |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| District #1 | | | | | X | | |
| District #2 | | | | | | | |
| District #3 | X | | | | | | |
| District #4 | | | | | | | |
| District #5 | | | | | | | |
| District #6 | | | | | | | |
| District #7 | | | | | | | |
| District #8 | X | | | | | X | |
| District #9 | | X | | | | | |
| District #10 | X | | | | | | |
| District #11 | X | X | | X | X | | |
| District #12 | X | | | | | | |
| District #13 | | X | | | X | | |
| District #14 | | | | | | | |
| District #15 | X | | X | | | | |
| District #16 | X | | | | | | |
| District #17 | X | | | | | X | |
| District #18 | | X | | | X | | |
| District #19 | X | | | | X | | X |
| District #20 | X | | | | | | |
| | 10 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 |

5.9 Recommendations Regarding Effective Practice in Freshman Transition Programs

Further research should be conducted in freshmen transition programs to ensure schools are getting the desired outcomes. Future effective research may include a case study to compare districts that have one high school with a freshmen transition program and another high school in the district that does not have a freshmen transition program. All districts should begin to keep statistics and data on the outcomes they are interested in improving by implementing the program. With increased accountability from the federal and state level, keeping accurate student outcomes will continue to be a necessity and requirement in order to continue to receive appropriate funding.

The results of this study illustrated that the districts interviewed strongly believe that a freshmen transition program was helping them in the transition of incoming freshmen. Districts that had kept pre and post program data showed significant improvements in their outcomes. Administrators and school staff gave a resounding approval for the programs they had in place and most were interested in exploring options to expand their programs. The hope of the research would be that school districts can review best practices that have been implemented in the Kansas City Metropolitan area and use components to help ease the transitional burden for incoming freshmen. Each district and school is unique, and not all of the components mentioned in the study will work for each school and student.

Limitations of the Study

The study had some limitations. Although twenty school districts were represented, only one high school from each school district was randomly selected. Although there may be common program attributes across each district, one can not make assumptions for the

school district based on the one high school interview. Another limiting factor was that the questions asked to each administrator were open-ended interview questions. The question was read and the administrator responded to each question. The questions were short and did not ask for clarification or more information. For example, an administrator may have responded that the goal of his/her high school program was to reduce the drop out rate and another administrator may have said his/her program was to acclimate the freshmen students. If the interviewee would have been given choices or asked specific components, both administrators may have responded that they had the program to achieve both of these outcomes. Finally, the study was based on administrators' perception and professional opinion of his/her high school's freshmen transition program. Statistics were not available in many interviews to help validate whether the program was helping with specific student outcomes. It is important to note that many observations and report of findings were based on perceptions of high school administrators.

Conclusion

So, is a freshmen transition program a sound reform model? It may still be too early to know, but based on public school administrator's responses, there are positive indicators of student improvement. The analysis of the districts may give some beginning points for research and may raise some interesting questions, but further research is needed to provide further evidence of a positive correlation between freshmen induction programs and positive student outcomes. Districts should continue to explore what they can do to help each student succeed; a freshmen transition program might be another resource districts can use to accomplish this goal.

Appendix #1

| School Districts | KS/MO | County | Student Pop. | Middle/high configuration | # of MS | # of HS |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| District #1 | KS | JO | 4,600 | 5-8 / 9-12 | 2 | 1 |
| District #2 | KS | JO | 28,000 | 7-8 / 9-12 | 7 | 5 |
| District#3 | MO | Clay | 10,000 | 8-9 / 10-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District #4 | KS | JO | 26,500 | 7-9 / 10-12 | 9 | 4 |
| District #5 | KS | JO | 21,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 8 | 4 |
| District #6 | KS | JO | 2,500 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#7 | KS | WY | 1,600 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#8 | MO | JA | 7,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 2 | 2 |
| District#9 | KS | WY | 2,400 | 6-8 / 9/12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#10 | MO | JA | 4,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#11 | MO | JA | 5,000 | 7-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#12 | MO | PL | 10,000 | 7-8 / 9-12 | 2 | 2 |
| District#13 | KS | WY | 4,100 | 7-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#14 | KS | WY | 20,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 8 | 5 |
| District#15 | MO | PL | 3,200 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 1 | 1 |
| District#16 | MO | Clay | 18,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 5 | 4 |
| District#17 | MO | JA | 8,800 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 3 | 2 |
| District#18 | KS | JO | 6,400 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 3 | 2 |
| District#19 | MO | JA | 17,000 | 7-8 / 9-12 | 3 | 3 |
| District#20 | MO | JA | 14,000 | 6-8 / 9-12 | 3 | 3 |

215,100

63

45

Appendix 2:

- 1) Descriptor questions:
 - a. Does your district have a freshmen transition program at the high school level?
 - b. How long have you had a freshmen transition program?
- 2) Curriculum questions:
 - a. Are you using a specific curriculum or program?
 - b. What is the name of the program/curriculum?
 - c. What components does your transition program possess?
- 3) Outcome questions:
 - a. What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program?
 - b. Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative?
- 4) Financial questions:
 - a. How much did the program cost?
 - b. What are yearly expenses for the program?
 - c. Is a staff member directly responsible for this program?
 - d. How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)?
- 5) Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district?
- 6) In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools?

Appendix#3

| | District #1 | | District #2 | | District #3 | | District #4 | |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Does your district/school have a freshmen transition program? | YES | | YES | | YES | | YES | |
| Number of middle schools | 2 middle (5,6,7,8) | | 7 (7 & 8 grades) | | 2 middle(6,7) 2 junior high(8,9) | | 9 middle (7,8,9) | |
| If no, have you ever had one? Ever considered implementing one? Will consider in the future? | | | | | | | | |
| Size of high school | 1 - 1200 | | 5 - 1800 | | 2000 students | | 4 - 1500 | |
| Size of district | 4600 | | 28,000 | | 10,000 students | | 26,500 | |
| Ethnicity | W - 84, A - 3.5, H - 5.5, O - 7 | | W - 73, A - 8, H - 11, O - 8 | | W - 85.5, A - 7, H - 4.5, O - 3 | | W - 76.5, A - 6, H - 9.5, O - 8 | |
| Economically disadvantaged | 27% | | 27% | | 17.50% | | 20.5 | |
| County | Johnson KS | | Johnson KS | | Clay MO | | Johnson KS | |
| How long have you had a freshmen transition program? | 10 years | | 3 years | | 10-15 years | | 3 years | |
| Are you using a specific curriculum or program? | No | | Yes | | no, locally created | | Yes | |
| What is the name of the program/curriculum? | Locally created | | Link Crew | | NA | | Link Crew -adaptations at some, One school has had peer mentoring for awhile | |
| What are the components of your transition program? | first day orientation, freshmen only seminars, social functions, hot topics, tolerance, separate wing, time management, peer mentors upperclassmen | | First day of school, grade level seminars, going to middle schools, Link Crew mentors | | Optional Orientation day early August- given schedule, scavenger hunt, cafeteria, meet counselors, clubs, locker, teachers, counselors go out in November and then again in Spring. Peer helper- At risk to at-risk, Student Assistance Team, Wrap-Around, RTI | | 1st day of school, freshmen only seminars, social functions, peer mentors, students and staff go to middle school, leadership/transition programs at middle school | |

| | District #1 | District #2 | District #3 | District #4 |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program? | attendance, behavior, grades | familiarize school mission, policies, have a role model, easy transition, stress | reduce fear factor, create opportunities and care and belonging | MTSS, interventions and strategies, academics, attendance, and grades |
| Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative? | better attendance, grades and less DR | less DR | NO | very pleased, showing good results |
| How much did the program cost? | None - locally created | \$2500 x 3 for Link Crew | NA | \$2500 per person per school |
| What are yearly expenses for the program? | \$2,000 | T-shirts, lunch \$1000 | NA | minimal |
| Is a staff member directly responsible for the program? | 12 teachers and 1 administrator | 3 teachers | all freshmen teachers | teachers and administration |
| How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)? | Activity Funds | PTA fund | general fund | building funds |
| Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district? | 8th grade counselors and teachers do transition plans for every kid, recommends classes, kids apart, any concerns, looking at freshmen to sophomore transition program | Future plans, expanding | making mandatory orientation, advocacy seminars, expand summer school program and after school tutoring to include transportation | WEB at middle schools, has emphasized transitions in district for many years, 21st century programs, some middle schools are split to high schools, transient population |
| In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools? | here to stay, continues to expand, crazy if schools don't have it, feel like it has helped with many aspects of school | to get rid of would be an outcry from parents and students, absolutely essential - easing the transition | sound reform model, necessary, development needs of student this age, adults feel it is necessary. | won't disappear, transitions make connections, efficiency of scale and vertical alignment, kids the reason, parents and students would be upset if program disappeared. |

| | District #5 | | District #6 | | District #7 | | District #8 | |
|--|--|---|---|-----|-------------|--|-------------|---|
| | Does your district/school have a freshmen transition program? | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| | Number of middle schools | 8 middle (6,7,8) | 1 middle (6,7,8) | | | 1 (6,7,8) | | 2 (6-8) |
| | If no, have you ever had one? Ever considered implementing one? Will consider in the future? | | | | | | | |
| | Size of high school | 4 - 1500 | 1 - 600 | | | 550 | | 2 - (900/1200) |
| | Size of district | 21,000 | 2500 | | | 1,600 | | 7,000 |
| | Ethnicity | W - 83, A - 3.25, H - 2, O - 11 | W - 87, A - 3, H - 4, O - 6 | | | W - 66, A - 22, H - 7, O - 5 | | W - 12, A - 80, H - 6, O - 2 |
| | Economically disadvantaged | 5.12% | 18% | | | 10% | | 76% |
| | County | Johnson KS | Johnson KS | | | Wyandotte KS | | Jackson MO |
| | How long have you had a freshmen transition program? | 10 years | 5 years | | | 8 to 10 years | | 3 years |
| | Are you using a specific curriculum or program? | locally created | Yes | | | No | | Customized, but using the Comprehensive Guidance Program from Missouri - High and Middle Schools that Work |
| | What is the name of the program/curriculum? | Freshmen Orientation | Boomerang and other | | | Freshmen orientation | | Freshmen Orientation / Freshmen Academy at Ruskin |
| | What are the components of your transition program? | bring all 8th graders in December, welcome video by Mustang Mentors, take into classes/lunch, bring back in January with parents, orientation nights-clubs, coaches in March, 1st day of school, freshmen only seminars/hot topics, no social | first day orientation, freshmen only seminars, hot topics-bullying, stereotyping, academic-tutoring and social focus - tailgate/talent show/dance, upper peer mentors | | | 1/2 day of school, meet with teachers and go to classes, enrollment last week of March, grade-level seminars, freshmen hallway | | 1/2 day, tour, Advisory Based Program once a week, curriculum for each grade level, course selection night, Career Consortium (6 districts), career connection course required for freshmen |

| District #5 | | District #6 | | District #7 | | District #8 | |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|-------------|--|
| What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program? | academic success, opportunities, RECRUITMENT | social aspect of schooling, tardies, attendance, integration, comfortable transition, volunteerism | orientation, eliminate stress, set expectations, names with faces | developing the rigor and relevance needed at the high school level, personal plan of study for each student, target grades, attendance, behavior at other school | | | |
| Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative? | has helped with numbers | Attendance and tardy levels are below freshmen rates before program started, other stats not kept anymore | NA | improved in all three areas | | | |
| How much did the program cost? | none, homegrown | \$7500 - 2500 per person | | 0 incorporated, homegrown | | | |
| What are yearly expenses for the program? | \$1200 - lunch | \$2500-3000 | NA | minimal | | | |
| Is a staff member directly responsible for the program? | 1 | 4 (3 teachers and 1 admin) | teachers | Advisory-based teachers, lead team, admin and counselor | | | |
| How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)? | Pepsi - Gift Fund | At-Risk and Johnson County Drug and Alcohol Grant | NA | NA | | | |
| Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district? | need to test every kid and make sure they are placed in appropriate classes from get-go - RECRUITMENT - so many options, losing TOP kids to other schools | middle school is exploring a transition program. Now, it is just part of the culture, do not have to advertise or send letters | not really wanting to expand at this time | making large high schools smaller, freshmen center, prepare middle school kids for rigor of high school, still waiting to see results of Freshmen Academy | | | |
| In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools? | has to be done, will not disappear, too important, proactive work up front pays off in the long run, parents and students positive comments | Sound reform model, never give up orientation day, popularity growing (34 LINKS leaders), continues to grow at the school, staff, students, and parents buy in and support | sound reform and will continue it | huge success, here to stay, very important, better job of preparing students for the rigor of high school and beyond | | | |

| | District #10 | | District #11 | | District #12 | |
|--|--|---|---|-----|--|-----|
| | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Does your district/school have a freshmen transition program? | | | | | | |
| Number of middle schools | 1 (6,7,8) | 1 (6,7,8) | 1 (7,8) - 375 freshmen | | 2 (7,8) | |
| If no, have you ever had one? Ever considered implementing one? Will consider in the future? | | | | | | |
| Size of high school | 750 | 1,200 | 1-1500 | | 2 - 1700 | |
| Size of district | 2,400 | 4,000 | 5,000 | | 10,000 | |
| Ethnicity | W - 72, A - 9, H - 11, O - 8 | W - 28, A - 58, H - 12, O - 2 | W - 83.5, A - 7, H - 6, O - 3.5 | | W - 78, A - 11, H - 6, O - 5 | |
| Economically disadvantaged | 37% | 65% | 43% | | 22% | |
| County | Wyandotte KS | Jackson MO | Jackson MO | | Platte MO | |
| How long have you had a freshmen transition program? | 5 years | 2 years | 8 years, 3 years with new changes | | 8 years | |
| Are you using a specific curriculum or program? | No, Locally created, took tours to other schools before implementing | NO - but looking into some Boomerang Project | High School 101 curriculum, Missouri Connections and plan of study, hometown | | no, Locally created | |
| What is the name of the program/curriculum? | Freshmen Tribes | NA | 9th Grade Center | | NA | |
| What are the components of your transition program? | 8th grade come over, freshmen orientation first day of school, middle school concept(teaming)/success time during seminar for freshmen, college visits, student involvement, career component, acclimation, Leadership Group, Junior and Senior tutors | 1st day of school for 1/2 day, Advisory-based seminar with juniors and seniors, go to enrollment in 8th grade | separate building, all core, lockers, separate free time, own lunch, middle school concept(teaming), day before school starts come in for orientation, schedule, tour, lunch, collaboration time, counselor meets with 8th grades and parent's night, Extended Learning opportunities, A+ tutors, Student Council helps | | 1st day freshmen only, freshmen seminars - junior and seniors speak about topics, 8th grade stuff, recruitment during year for other classes, summer school, survival skills class in summer | |

| District #9 | | District #10 | | District #11 | | District #12 | |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--------------|--|
| What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program? | support, team effort, grades, office referrals, attendance | all the help they can get, schedule, lunch, acclimated, lockers, organizations and activities | develop relationships with an adult in the building, restricting upperclassmen interaction, academic transition piece discipline | | | | |
| Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative? | less F's, better attendance and less DR | too new | Yes | No | | | |
| How much did the program cost? | tours to other schools/homegrown | nothing, but will as purchase program | No extra cost | Nothing yet, looking | | | |
| What are yearly expenses for the program? | 1000 | none | social functions | 1/8 of teacher, summer school, busses | | | |
| Is a staff member directly responsible for the program? | 2 adm, 2 counselor, 8 teachers | Entire Staff | 3 freshmen teams of teachers/admin/counselor | teacher (1/8) and other teachers | | | |
| How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)? | Activity funds | NA | NA | summer school budget and school funds | | | |
| Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district? | looking at sophomore year, start focus of fresh/soph on AYP and junior senior on careers, parent meeting, team approach | 6th grade has a program, looking at a full year program and curriculum | Biggest fear is to go back to traditional schedule to accommodate budget shortfall-wipe out program, need solid 9th12th transition program using personal course of study | making it better and want to expand, more curriculum and grade-based, more organized | | | |
| In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools? | Imperative for success, AYP has forced us to look @ what practices are and to change these, here to stay, big impact, positive comments from students and parents | sound reform; transition dip is there, attendance and grades dip, getting comfortable and minimizing the fear | Sound reform model, they are reaping the rewards, teachers and parents like it, flexible with high flyer, have hired the right teachers onboard. | sound reform model, crucial to student success | | | |

| | District #13 | | District #14 | | District #15 | | District #16 | |
|--|---|--|--|-----|--|-----|---|-----|
| | Does your district/school have a freshmen transition program? | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Number of middle schools | | 1 (7,8) | 8 (6,7,8) | | 2 (6-8) | | 5 (6-8) | |
| If no, have you ever had one? Ever considered implementing one? Will consider in the future? | | | | | | | | |
| Size of high school | | 1- 1300 | 5 - 1000 | | 1 - 900 | | 4 - 1400 | |
| Size of district | | 4,100 | 20,000 | | 3,200 | | 18,000 | |
| Ethnicity | | W - 54, A - 11, H - 23.5, O - 11.5 | W - 16, A - 42, H - 38, O - 4 | | W - 78, A - 11, H - 6, O - 5 | | W - 70.5, A - 13.5, H - 10, O - 6 | |
| Economically disadvantaged | | 65% | 84% | | 22% | | 41% | |
| County | | Wyandotte KS | Wyandotte KS | | Platte, MO | | Clay MO | |
| How long have you had a freshmen transition program? | | 4th year - 9th Grade Academy | 8 years | | 1 year | | 2 years | |
| Are you using a specific curriculum or program? | | Yes | No | | Yes | | locally created with scripted curriculum | |
| What is the name of the program/curriculum? | | bullseye, district mapping, Locally created, Link Crew, staff trained in Harry Wong and DeFore PLC | NA (8-12) | | Link Crew and locally created | | Freshmen Orientation | |
| What are the components of your transition program? | | first day of school orientation, restructured school-all core classes, lockers, seminar twice a week - counseling, career, social - talking, parents sign off, Academic Enrichment (after school), credit recovery | 1st day only for 8th grade, acclimation, 8th grade orientation in Spring, transitions throughout 5 years, advocacy is big, mentoring in seminars | | 8th/9th counselor, enrollment go in 8th class once a month, parent meeting end of March for schedules/open house, use Missouri Connections and 4 year of study, Pirate time, freshmen 25 Junior/senior mentors, orientation, | | counselors visit middle schools visit about diploma options, Missouri Connections, 8th grade enrollment Summer School, School Community Resource Specialist, social work, 1/2 day orientation with assembly and meet advisors, advisory program 4 days a week, senior mentors, peer helpers | |

| District #13 | | District #14 | | District #15 | | District #16 | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|--------------|--|
| What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program? | Reduce Retention and Discipline Referrals | Reduce attrition rates and increase diplomas | getting them to belong and not get lost, identify with adult and mentor, grades, attendance, discipline | students to graduate, tracking all four grades, | | | |
| Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative? | RR - 05-06 - 29%, 06-07 - 20%, 07-08-14%, 08-09-9% / DR down a little | yes | will compare data | discipline has decreased, teacher surveys positive, Grad rate is higher | | | |
| How much did the program cost? | and DeFore training | NA | was too expensive to buy | \$1,000 | | | |
| What are yearly expenses for the program? | \$3 to \$5000 | NA | t-shirts, supplies | sub cost and transportation | | | |
| Is a staff member directly responsible for the program? | 1 admin, 1 counselor, 2 SPED and 10 teachers | middle year staff (8,9,10) | counselor, teachers, PLC time | 16 teachers - TIP team | | | |
| How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)? | Title IX and At-Risk | general fund | Sprint Grant | NA | | | |
| Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district? | looking at 10th grade transition, do a lot with 8th to 9th - pre visits, everyone is working together - total buy -in, built up seminar curriculum | formalize middle year program with a focus on 8,9,10, send teachers to more formal training | want it to continue to expand, hopeful it will work | looking at AVID model (expensive), want to get everyone trained in Boy's Town model, cost money and trying to get more teacher collaboration | | | |
| In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools? | just not a reform model, but an integral piece of the freshmen curriculum, parents and student have many positive comments, there is a purpose and very supported | round for long time, continue to refine, a must in schools for success | keep building, success with the program, trial years, here to stay, dream is to continue to have it get bigger and bigger | sound reform model, not just a freshmen transition program, but it is for all students, system is in place, needs to be in schools, students learn expectations and opportunities | | | |

| | District #17 | District #18 | District #19 | District #20 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Does your district/school have a freshmen transition program? | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Number of middle schools | 3 (6,7,8) | 3 middle (6, 7,8) | 3 (7,8) | 3 (6-8) |
| If no, have you ever had one? Ever considered implementing one? Will consider in the future? | | | | |
| Size of high school | 2-1400 | 1-700-1-1000 | 3-1800 | 4-950 |
| Size of district | 8,800 | 6400 | 17,000 | 14,000 |
| Ethnicity | W - 45, A - 45, H - 8, O - 2 | W - 85.5, A - 3, H - 6, O - 5.5 | W - 81.5, A - 12.5, H - 4, O - 2 | W - 75, A - 11, H - 11, O - 3 |
| Economically disadvantaged | 50% | 13.5 | 13.40% | 55% |
| County | Jackson MO | Johnson KS | Jackson MO | Jackson MO |
| How long have you had a freshmen transition program? | ?? | 2 years | 10 years | 5 years |
| Are you using a specific curriculum or program? | Locally created | Yes | Student planner curriculum | Locally created curriculum |
| What is the name of the program/curriculum? | NA | Learning from the Heart / Harry Wong | Freshmen Transition Day | Freshmen Transition Day |
| What are the components of your transition program? | 2 8th grade academic/activity nights, April take tour of building, freshmen only day for enrollment, Connections ClassA+ tutors-community college hours, Jaytime-advisory time, freshmen stay with same teacher for all four years, once a week do hot topics - team building, bullying, at-risk are identified, 8th graders take summer school | counselors visit 8th grade classrooms, enrollment nights, parent meetings in Jan/Feb., first day of school freshmen only-1/2 StuCo, 1/2 academic, follow schedule, freshmen only seminars, junior/senior mentors, hot topics, freshmen wing, summer school for math and science-remediation, core teachers/team | 8th grade orientation night in Spring, counselors go to ms, Spring Enrollment conference with each parent/student, open house night, 1/2 day transition day, pep rally and schedule, mentoring group (seminar) with curriculum for 4 years, Freshmen hall, Summer school for rem/enrichment, Missouri Connections | pre-enrollment in Jan., 8th graders come to high in Feb., elective fairs, high school students go to middle schools, 8th grade teachers go with 8th graders, summer school, grade level seminars, senior mentors, Missouri connections, freshmen focus advisory program |

| | District #17 | District #18 | District #19 | District #20 |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| What specific aspects are you trying to target with this program? | try to identify adult with each freshmen, teambuilding, trying to target kids, need support, trying to get freshmen ready for high school change, Grad. Rate | nature vs nurture, pro-active, enhance ownership and involvement, decrease disassociation | feel connected to school, orientation, establish relationship and point person with an adult | ins and outs of school, attendance, increase grad. Rate, purpose, find advisor |
| Do you have any statistics that illustrate your program is meeting your desired goals for the program/initiative? | YES Grad rate is up, discipline is down | Pre and Post data kept, involvement in extra-curricular activities, tardies, grades | surveys have been positive | numbers have increased in attendance and grad. Rate |
| How much did the program cost? | NA | Wong | NA | big bucks |
| What are yearly expenses for the program? | small budget for Jaytime/supplies | NA | t-shirts, prizes, lunch - | Staff, professional development, site visits |
| Is a staff member directly responsible for the program? | 3 teachers and 1 counselor | Core teams | lead teacher and committee | coordinator, 5 teachers |
| How do you pay for this program (At-risk funds, etc.)? | NA | NA | business partners | Grants |
| Is there any other information you would be willing to share about freshmen transitioning in your school and/or school district? | expand, more intense at beginning of year | not as successful as would like it to be as the school and staff is overburden with AYP and NCLB | looking at expanding services into sophomore year, place students in learning lab (study hall) if have 3 F | 5 houses for making big school smaller |
| In your professional opinion, do you believe a freshmen transition program is a sound reform model or do you think it will soon disappear in public schools? | develop relationships, earmarked to help at-risk kids, have to help kids, can't lose kids, here to stay in some form or another | Seen positive responses, sound reform model, improves performance, want to continue to improve program, get kids prepared for next level, help at-risk kids | advocated for long time, on going improvement, sound reform model, parents, students, staff all positive feedback. | part of culture now, parents and students expect it, sound reform model, won't go away, other districts are using them as example, changed massively in the past few years |

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